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FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF MARK TWAIN

By VICTOR ROYCE WEST, A.M.

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PREFATORY NOTE

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VICTOR ROYCE WEST

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FOLKLORE IN THE WORKS OF MARK TWAIN

I

INTRODUCTION

In assembling for investigation those beliefs and customs that fall under the general head of *folklore* the student may draw upon two principal sources or upon either one of these sources. He may go directly to the people among whom such beliefs and customs are current, or he may consult those written or printed records that most faithfully reflect popular superstitions and usages. Ideally, he should have access to both sources. He should have the opportunity to study his materials as they make up part of the living thought and manners of the folk. And he should, moreover, be in a position to examine these materials as they have been caught up and embodied in such writings as have employed them in an intelligent and sympathetic way. Happily, the student of folk beliefs and customs occasionally discovers a writer who may be said to combine in himself both these general sources. Such a writer is Mark Twain, so far, especially, as he confines himself to a depiction of life along the Mississippi — to that humble background or cultural milieu of which he was a product.

Democratic and typically American, Mark Twain was, in Howells' phrase, "the Lincoln of American letters." In a profound sense he was a man of the people. Their outlook on life was his. Their sayings and their superstitions, as recorded, for example, in *Tom Sawyer*, or in *Huckleberry Finn*, were natively his, and they come to his readers in all their original character, unimpaired by literary handling or artistic distortion. The world he knew as a boy made its inevitable claims upon him as a writer — claims that were whole-heartedly recognized in the simplicity and sincerity that went to the making of his books. This world was a world at once fearsome and picturesque by virtue of its portents and omens, its ghosts and witches. It was a world

which Mark Twain must have recalled when he made the following entry in *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar*:

> Let me make the superstitions of a nation and I care not who makes its laws or its songs either.[1]

Thus does Mark Twain attest in an obscure note his opinion of those hand-me-down beliefs and customs known in his day — just prior to any wide scientific examination of them as "folklore." Nor was this observation one that he appreciated only at the conclusion of his more active literary career, only with the publication of *Following the Equator*, in which it appeared, in 1896. Twenty years earlier, when *Tom Sawyer* went to the publisher, Mark Twain realized sufficiently the importance of the folklore content to say in a prefatory note:

> The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period of this story—that is to say, thirty or forty years ago.
> Hartford, 1876. The Author.[2]

Through succeeding works a variable folklore content indicates that at no time did he swerve from belief in the importance of folklore. Leanness in certain volumes indicates only that Mark Twain recognized an artistry in contrast; for in many of his other works the degree of attention given superstitious beliefs attests investigation of available material to supplement his own first-hand knowledge.

In this study, Mississippi Valley folklore has been given major consideration. The beliefs of this section had become, from oft-repeated " general conversation which. . . . drifted . . . . into talk about dreams and superstitions," [3] a part of Mark Twain's mental equipment in youth. Of the lore here included, the bulk is that which was the common talk of the Mississippi Valley region in the nineteenth century. Reminiscences and survivals of folklore from other lands will be noted simply as examples of the diffusion that must account for similarities in folk beliefs in distant countries, local adaptations or originations excepted. In his travels Mark Twain

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[1] *Following the Equator*, II, 163.
[2] *Tom Sawyer*, Preface, p. xix.
[3] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 304.

observed, or made inquiry about, the folk-customs of the countries and regions he was visiting and his reports recount his findings rather fully. These, since they are obviously at second-hand and since they testify to his interest alone, have not been included. That his interest was great, however, a section of his report of a visit to India proves:

> . . . . You can get the *facts* of a custom—like caste, and Suttee, and Thuggee, and so on—and with the facts a theory which tries to explain, but never quite does it to your satisfaction. You can never quite understand *how* so strange a thing could have been born, nor *why*.[4]

Here, it will be seen, Mark Twain becomes almost the anthropologist. The enthusiasm with which he gathers knowledge of customs and traditions indicates that he would have been an avid student of folklore. Certainly his knowledge of human nature, his aptness in sensing human motives, would have been valuable applied to problems rising from the study of superstition. But his approach was destined to be quizzical rather than scholarly. We would not have it otherwise; and yet it is truly regrettable that he did not find time to compile, for instance, all the folklore of Negro derivation which he must have known, for with the death of the older Negroes it is rapidly disappearing.

In two volumes, *The Prince and the Pauper* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* many superstitions of early England are included. Mark Twain, while recognizing their antiquity, does not certify their period with any exactitude.

> The . . . . customs touched upon in this tale are historical. . . . . It is not pretended that these . . . . customs existed in England in the sixth century; no, it is only pretended that inasmuch as they existed in the English and other civilizations of far later times, it is safe to consider that it is no libel upon the sixth century to suppose them to have been in practice in that day also. . . . . [5]

Many of the instances of magic and enchantment to which Mr. Clemens refers in *The Connecticut Yankee* are directly traceable to Malory's *Morte D'Arthur.* Other customs that

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[4] *Following the Equator*, II, 130.
[5] *A Connecticut Yankee, Preface*, p. xxi.

Mark Twain included in this and kindred productions had been adapted to his especial situations by a happy faculty for juxtaposition with just that touch of incongruity that makes for humor. Their diversity may be accounted for only by a breadth of reading that must have ranged from current robber and pirate tales, through Homer, Shakespeare, MacPherson's *Ossian*, the *Bible*, the *Arabian Nights*, and *Robin Hood*, to the most detailed period-histories available in his day.

But neither casual reading, however diversified, nor childhood word-of-mouth sources could have supplied him with the details of fairy-lore found in one of his final works. With but slight exceptions, fairies do not appear in Negro folklore, nor were they common in the Mississippi Valley folklore of Mark Twain's childhood. Scarcely the most casual mention of a fairy appears in any of his writings except one, the *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, published serially and anonymously in 1895 and 1896 — and these volumes compensate for the omissions in all the rest by the richness of their Continental fairy-lore. Mark Twain had long been a profound admirer of the character of Joan of Arc, had long felt the warmest stirrings of indignation over the injustices done her. When he resolved to make her the central figure of a tale, it was with a serious intent to place her character before the world in a new way. He realized, however, that if he wrote the book under his own name his readers would laugh, would think that he was poking fun. Therefore he published *Joan of Arc* anonymously, and considered it foremost among his writings.

The initial situation of the Joan book, he realized, must interest his reader but must serve to disguise himself as author. It is significant that for this important opening incident he selected the intimate companionship of Joan and her playmates with the *fairies* of *L'Arbre Fée de Bourlemont*,

the traditional fairy tree.[6] When the fairies were banished, it was Joan who defended them.[7]

Of all the proofs of Mark Twain's belief in the literary effect of the use of folklore this is perhaps the most clear. Furthermore, in addition to providing an understanding of the period in which Joan lived and the superstitious nature of the folk of that day, it served as a preparation for the reader's acceptance of Joan's Voices, for:

> . . . . Of course no one doubted that she had seen supernatural beings and been spoken to and advised by them. And of course no one doubted that by supernatural help miracles had been done by Joan, ... It would have been foolish to doubt these things, for we all know that the air is full of devils and angels that are visible to traffickers in magic on the one hand and to the stainlessly holy on the other; but what many and perhaps most did doubt was, that Joan's visions, Voices, and miracles came from God. . . . .[8]

But such items, although indicative of Mark Twain's keen interest in folklore and his appreciation of its significance to humankind, are not, as has been noted, sufficiently indigenous to America *per se* to be discussed at length in the present study. Major attention will therefore be accorded to the Mississippi Valley folklore which he knew at first-hand, and which he has scattered so liberally through his works.

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[6] *Joan of Arc*, I, 9 f.: "In a noble open space carpeted with grass on the high ground toward Vaucouleurs stood a most majestic beech tree with wide-reaching arms and a grand spread of shade, and by it a limpid spring of cold water; and on summer days the children went there—oh, every summer for more than five hundred years—went there and sang and danced around the tree for hours together, refreshing themselves at the spring from time to time, and it was most lovely and enjoyable. Also they made wreaths of flowers and hung them upon the tree and about the spring to please the fairies that lived there; for they liked that, being idle innocent little creatures, as all fairies are, and fond of anything delicate and pretty like wild flowers put together in that way. And in return for this attention the fairies did any friendly thing they could for the children, such as keeping the spring always full and clear and cold, and driving away serpents and insects that sting; and so there was never any unkindness between the fairies and the children during more than five hundred years—tradition said a thousand—but only the warmest affection and the most perfect trust and confidence; and whenever a child died the fairies mourned just as that child's playmates did, and the sign of it was there to see; for before the dawn on the day of the funeral they hung a little immortelle over the place where that child was used to sit under the tree. I know this to be true by my own eyes; it is not hearsay. And the reason it was known that the fairies did it was this—that it was made all of black flowers of a sort not known in France anywhere."

[7] See *ibid.*, I, 14 ff.

II

GHOSTLORE

The conversation of Mark Twain's youth, as nearly as it may be reconstructed from his works, must have been rife with talk of "ghosts." In speaking of his boyhood, he states definitely the importance of the ghost story in the day's routine:

> . . . . I can hear Uncle Dan'l [a colored servant] telling the immortal tales which Uncle Remus Harris was to gather into his book and charm the world with, by and by; and I can feel again the creepy joy which quivered through me when the time for the ghost story was reached—and the sense of regret, too, which came over me, for it was always the last story of the evening and there was nothing between it and the unwelcome bed.[1]

These stories which impressed him so deeply he was later to recount to his own children and to lecture-hall audiences, as is instanced by an entry in the biography by his little daughter Susy. On the occasion of his appearance at a girl's college as a lecturer the child had recorded:

> . . . . He read . . . . 'The Golden Arm,' a ghost story that he heard down South when he was a little boy. 'The Golden Arm' papa had told me before, but he had startled me so that I did not much wish to hear it again. But I had resolved this time to be prepared and not to let myself be startled, but still papa did, and very much; he startled the whole roomful of people and they jumped as one man.[2]

Of the origin of the ghost in folk conception Mr. Clemens gives no hint. Belief was apparently common that a person's ghost took form just at the moment of death, for one man was said to be " this moment delivering up the ghost," [3] and another " turned his face to the wall and gave up the ghost." [4]

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[1] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 112 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, 170. Mark Twain quotes this story, with directions for effective telling, in full in *The $30,000 Bequest*, "How to Tell A Story," pp. 268 ff. It is cited in this study, APPENDIX, pp. 79 f.

[3] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 65.

[4] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "About Magnanimous Incident Literature," p. 329.

Popular superstition held that ghosts assumed the exact appearance by which they were usually known in the material state. The explanation of certain "humbug" in one tale is found in this notion, for the success of an experiment in "materialization of spirits" proved to be a hoax.[5] A folklore basis for this belief existed, and it may be believed that, as Colonel Sellers blandly remarked: "We must keep absolutely still about these materializations. . . . . the negroes wouldn't stay on the place a minute."[6] This bit of lore furnishes a suggestion concerning the origin of the phrase-expletive, "Great Caesar's ghost!" Occurring five times, with variations,[7] it is probably a borrowing from Shakespearean lore.[8]

The same superstition accounts for the Nigger Jim's mistake in judging Tom Sawyer to be a ghost returning to the balloon:

> . . . . Then he let off an awful scream, and flung his head and arms back and let off another one, because there was a white glare just then, and he had raised up his face just in time to see Tom's, as white as snow, rise above the gunnel and look him right in the eye. He thought it was Tom's ghost, you see.[9]

The same notion recurs when Mark Twain identifies the ghost of the "majestic Cardiff giant," which appeared to him as a

> . . . . Thing; gradually its cloudy folds took shape—an arm appeared, then legs, then a body, and last a great sad face looked out of the vapor. Stripped of its filmy housings, naked, muscular and comely, the majestic Cardiff Giant loomed above me![10]

"Nigger Jim," explaining a desert mirage, gives further expression to the superstition when he groans:

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[5] *The American Claimant*, p. 27 f.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[7] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 91: "'Caesar's ghost!'" *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 285: "'Great Caesar's ghost!'" *Ibid.*, p. 49: "'By the great Caesar's ghost, ... '" *Tom Sawyer*, p. 226: "'great Caesar's ghost!'" *Roughing It*, I, 215: "'Ger-reat Caesar's ghost—'"

[8] Caesar's ghost appeared to Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, IV, iii, and was recognized.

[9] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 35.

[10] *Sketches New and Old*, "A Ghost Story," p. 261. Mr. Clemens first heard goblins bearing chains (p. 260); then when he rose in bed to a sitting posture "my face came in contact with a clammy hand!" (pp. 260 f.) The apparition then became "a huge, cloudy presence before me."

> " . . . . hit's a *ghos'*, dat's what it is, en I hopes to goodness we ain't gwine to see it no mo'. Dey's *been* a lake, en suthin's happened, en de lake's dead, en we's seen its ghos'; . . . . " [11]

There is the added suggestion here that ghosts of inanimate as well as animate objects exist. In English folklore, inanimate objects are seldom allowed to possess spirits, but " in Africa, beings animate and inanimate " may; so one looks " upon the few inanimate Negro ghosts as of African complexion if not of African origin." [12] Mark Twain, in this example, reveals the primary source of his folklore.

In his observation of Mississippi River lore, Clemens gives further evidence of his acceptance of the substance-ghost. He is speaking of high-water cut-offs:

> . . . . There used to be a tradition connected with it. It was said that a boat came along there in the night and went around the enormous elbow the usual way, ... The perplexed pilots fell to swearing, and finally uttered the entirely unnecessary wish that they might never get out of that place. . . . . that particular prayer was answered, ... So to this day that phantom steamer is still butting around in that deserted river, trying to find her way out. . . . . [13]

Again, in late life, writing his reminiscences at Florence in January, 1904, he describes buildings " as if they might not be villas and cities at all, but the ghosts of perished ones of the remote and dim Etruscan times." [14]

Particularly is it possible that a ghost's earthly things may turn to " ghost-stuff " for him. Huck does not understand this:

> " . . . . How can there be a ghost-bag, Tom?"
>
> " . . . . Whatever a ghost has, turns to ghost-stuff. They've got to have their things, like anybody else. You see, yourself, that its clothes was turned to ghost-stuff. Well, then, what's to hender its bag from turning, too? Of course it done it." [15]

The boys were hunting boots which had diamonds cached in the heels, but after arguing themselves into the idea that boots and diamonds both had turned to " ghost-stuff," they deemed it wise to give up the search.

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[11] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 68.
[12] N. N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, p. 145.
[13] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 158.
[14] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 207.
[15] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 156.

> " . . . . Was the ghost barefooted?"
> "No, it wasn't. What of it?"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> " . . . . Didn't the breeches and goggles and whiskers and handbag and every blessed thing turn to ghost-stuff? Everything it had on turned, didn't it? It shows that the reason its boots turned too was because it still had them on after it started to go ha'nting around, and if that ain't proof that them blatherskites didn't get the boots, I'd like to know what you'd *call* proof." [16]

" Looked like a ghost " [17] seems an innocent enough phrase; but what is the appearance of one? Catherine, the medieval French girl, says of ghosts in her house: ." Tradition says that these ghosts have never been seen." [18] The transplanted Connecticut Yankee declares:

> " . . . . sho! why, it's pale and noiseless—just ghosts scuffling in a fog. . . . . " [19]

Mark Twain compares fallen Hellenic statues in moonlight with ghosts:

> . . . . It startled us, ... to see a stony white face stare suddenly up at us out of the grass with its dead eyes. The place seemed alive with ghosts. . . . . [20]

The Mississippi Valley belief is set forth clearly by Mark Twain's two chief purveyors of ghostlore. Tom Sawyer, when he sees what he says is a ghost, is firm in his belief that " They're mostly dim and smoky, or like they're made out of fog," [21] and when he later discovers that " *You can't see the bushes through it!*" [22] it is to him convincing proof that what he has seen is not a ghost. Defining " the way a ghost does," Huck declares that they " . . . . come sliding around in a shroud, when you ain't noticing, and peep over your shoulder all of a sudden and grit their teeth." [23]

In one instance Mark Twain has described ghost-appearance in his own words:

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[16] *Ibid.*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 159.
[17] *Following the Equator*, II, 269.
[18] *Joan of Arc*, I, 243.
[19] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 122.
[20] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 55.
[21] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 156.
[22] *Ibid.*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 175.
[23] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 207.

> . . . . a ghostly procession of wanderers from the filmy hosts without had drifted through a chasm in the crater wall and filed round and round, and gathered and sunk and blended together till the abyss was stored to the brim with a fleecy fog. . . . . [24]

Spirits, a quite different species of supernatural being in Mark Twain's works, may be known to be present only when the air is filled with "the rush of invisible wings," [25] or simply "with invisible spirits." [26] "The superstitious Samaritans" are said to believe in "fierce spirits invisible to men." [27] A spirit which speaks to Mark Twain becomes visible, however, while it says, "I am unsubstantial, just as other spirits are." [28]

Apparitions, as their name suggests, are clearly visible:

> . . . . I had seen an apparition at last, with my own eyes, in broad daylight. . . . . [29]

He tells of another man, who "looked up, over his shoulder, and saw an apparition — a very allegory of Hunger!" [30] This also occurred in midday.

Mark Twain seems to make a distinction between each of these supernatural beings, and a further distinction between them and "dead people." The latter have properties not quite akin to ghosts; a corpse in a graveyard may, for instance, "stick his skull out and say something!" [31]

Ghosts are capable of motion:

> "Lord, Tom, they're coming! They're coming, sure. What'll we do?" [32]

But how could Huck know the apparitions were "coming"? If they are dim and murky, they are also "pale and noiseless" [33] in movement, as he suggests in his comparison:

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[24] *Roughing It*, II, 282 f.
[25] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 245.
[26] *The Gilded Age*, I, 20.
[27] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 291.
[28] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," p. 312.
[29] *Literary Essays*, "Mental Telegraphy," p. 136.
[30] *Roughing It*, II, 150.
[31] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 207.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[33] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 122.

> " . . . . I could only just gasp along the way you do in a dream when there's a ghost gaining on you." [34]

It seems, too, that there is no " sound of footfall," [35] and that they have " never left a track." [36] The general conception was that " faint zephyrs were caused by their passing wings," [37] and that when " a faint moan came sighing through the branches of the forest and the boys felt a fleeting breath upon their cheeks " they " shuddered with the fancy that the Spirit of the Night had gone by." [38] But this experience was slight compared with one in a place " full of ghosts laying for them behind everything and under the beds and shivering through the air." [39]

However, in his description of the ghost of the spurious Cardiff Giant, Mark Twain himself violates many principles of ghostlore:

> . . . . Presently I heard a heavy footstep in my room—the step of an elephant, it seemed to me—it was not like anything human. . . . . straining the floors and joists till they creaked again as it passed— . . . . In the ashes on the hearth, side by side with my own bare footprint, was another, so vast that in comparison mine was but an infant's! . . . . I heard that elephantine tread again. I noted its approach nearer and nearer, along the musty halls, ... The tread reached my very door and paused— . . . . [40]

Yet other qualities of this spurious ghost are acceptable:

> . . . . I heard it approach the door—pass out without moving bolt or lock— . . . . found that the locks and bolts were just as I had left them, ... In distant parts of the building I heard the muffled slamming of doors. I heard, at intervals, stealthy footsteps creeping in and out among the corridors, and up and down the stairs. Sometimes these noises approached my door, hesitated, and went away again. I heard the clanking of chains faintly, in remote passages, and listened while the clanking grew nearer—while it wearily climbed the stairways, marking each move by the loose surplus of chain that fell with an accented rattle upon each succeeding step as the goblin that bore it advanced. I heard muttered sentences; half-uttered screams that seemed smothered violently; and the swish of invisible garments, the rush of invisible wings. . . . . [41]

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[34] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 43.
[35] *Following the Equator*, II, 84; *Roughing It*, II, 124.
[36] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 18.
[37] *The Gilded Age*, I, 20.
[38] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 144.
[39] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 372.
[40] *Sketches New and Old*, "A Ghost Story," pp. 259 ff.
[41] *Ibid.*, "A Ghost Story," pp. 259 f.

He tells us in *Joan of Arc* of a French tradition that the old ghosts "have merely been heard,"[42] and in his autobiography uses the expression, "hardly a ghost of a whisper."[43] In *Tom Sawyer* he mentions the fact that at midnight, "Spirits whispered in the rustling leaves."[44] It is late at night, when "out of the stillness, little, scarcely perceptible noises" begin "to emphasize themselves," that one thinks of the spirits. Then, "The ticking of the clock began to bring itself into notice. Old beams began to crack mysteriously. The stairs creaked faintly. Evidently spirits were abroad."[45]

Sounds were of importance in recognizing inanimate ghosts. The legendary stranded boat described in *Life on the Mississippi*[46] was to be located by the "muffled cough of her scape-pipes and the plaintive cry of her leadsmen,"[47] and Mark Twain muses:

> . . . . a [spinning] wheel . . . . whose rising and falling wail, heard from a distance, ... filled my atmosphere with the wandering spirits of the dead; . . . .[48]

But there are other ghost noises:

> . . . . away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving. . . . .[49]

This is what Huck tells; and again on down the river he says of a noise:

> . . . . it made you feel crawly; it was like spirits carrying on that way in the air. Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says:
> "No; spirits wouldn't say, 'Dern the dern fog.'"[50]

A man trailed for crime to a western mining camp complains that spirits

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[42] *Joan of Arc*, I, 243.
[43] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 196.
[44] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 206.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[46] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 158.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[48] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 102 f.
[49] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 4.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

> ". . . . were always whispering around my bed and plotting against me, and it broke my sleep."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "They all agreed, and whispered, and jibbered with joy. . . . ." [51]

In *Huckleberry Finn* speech is attributed to a corpse: ". . . . the dead man says ther's six thous'n dollars." [52] A warrior paddling by Maiden's Rock may hear "the soft sweet music of long-departed Winona, darling of Indian song and story," which "romantic superstition has invested with a voice." [53]

Some ghost noises are attributed to "restless" spirits. One night in the graveyard Tom and Huck, Mark Twain's most frequent spokesmen of superstition, felt the presence of spirits:

> A faint wind moaned through the trees and Tom feared it might be the spirits of the dead, complaining of being disturbed. The boys talked little, and only under their breath, for the time and the place and the pervading solemnity and silence oppressed their spirits. . . . . [54]

The author carries this notion, together with the thought of "laying the ghost," back into medieval France:

> . . . . the ghosts of their house had been a dread and a misery to them and their forebears for generations, and nobody had ever been found yet who was willing to confront them and find out what their trouble was, so that the family could heal it and content the poor specters and beguile them into tranquillity and peace.[55]

Even then, the story is, it was considered "no proper shame to be afraid of ghosts, seeing how helpless the living are in their hands." [56] The translator of the Joan narrative and his companions determined to remain in the haunted chamber at night in order to "lay the ghost":

> At last, faint and far and weird and slow, came a . . . . distant bell tolling midnight. . . . .
>
> One minute—two minutes—three minutes of this, and then we heard a long deep groan, and everybody sprang up and stood, with

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[51] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, "A Double Barreled Detective Story," p. 353.
[52] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 231.
[53] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 480.
[54] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 81 f.
[55] *Joan of Arc*, I, 233.
[56] *Ibid.*, I, 243 f.

> his legs quaking. . . . . There was a pause, then we heard muffled sobbings, mixed with pitiful ejaculations. Then there was a second voice, low and not distinct, and the one seemed trying to comfort the other; and so the two voices went on, with moanings, and soft sobbings, and, ah, the tones were so full of compassion and sorrow and despair! . . . . [57]

Those ghost noises came from "that little dungeon" that had been walled up.[58] The inference here is one explained in *Tom Sawyer* by a conversation between the boys. According to Huck, ghosts "haunt" the place of death, unless money is involved:

> ". . . . Injun Joe's ghost is round about there, certain."
>
> "No it ain't, Huck, no it ain't. It would ha'nt the place where he died—away out at the mouth of the cave—five mile from here."
>
> "No, Tom, it wouldn't. It would hang round the money. I know the way of ghosts, and so do you."
>
> Tom began to fear that Huck was right. Misgivings gathered in his mind. But presently an idea occurred to him—
>
> "Looky here, Huck, what fools we're making of ourselves! Injun Joe's ghost ain't a-going to come around where there's a cross!" [59]

Tom "knows about ghosts," as Huck says, but is never at any time fond of them. He says of the sarcophagus in a pyramid:

> ". . . . But I didn't take no interest in the place, because there could be ghosts there, of course; not fresh ones, but I don't like no kind." [60]

In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, a medieval contemporary speaks of Gawaine's ghost to "The Boss":

> ". . . . Gawaine—Gawaine's head is at Dover Castle, he fell in the fight there—Gawaine appeared to Arthur in a dream, at least his ghost did, and warned him to refrain from conflict . . . . " [61]

This item, although procured by Clemens at second-hand, illustrates the aforementioned belief that a ghost's residence will be near the dead body from which it originally came.

Midnight was the hour of release for Mississippi Valley ghosts as well as for those of ancient France; it was out of the question for them to appear in the daytime:

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[57] *Ibid.*, I, 244.
[58] *Ibid.*, I, 244.
[59] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 275.
[60] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 115.
[61] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 417.

"No, sir, they don't ever come out only at night—and then not till after twelve. . . . . "[62]

The fact that a certain shade seemed to violate this rule was Tom's clue that what he and Huck had taken for a ghost was but a ghost-impersonation:

"Huck, there's something mighty curious about this one, don't you know? *It* oughtn't to be going around in the daytime."

"That's so, Tom—I never heard the like of it before."

" . . . . There's something wrong about this one, now you mark my words. I don't believe it's got any right to be around in the daytime. . . . . "

. . . . . .

"It ain't a ghost at all. . . . . "[63]

Knowledge of the " midnight release " quieted the boys' minds one night when they were planning an excursion to the local graveyard. They were not afraid to go early one Saturday evening, and after midnight it would be Sunday:

" . . . . I reckon they'll come after old Hoss Williams to-night."

"But they buried him Saturday. Didn't they get him Saturday night?"

"Why, how you talk! How could their charms work till midnight?—and *then* it's Sunday. Devils don't slosh around much of a Sunday, I don't reckon."

"I never thought of that. That's so. . . . . "[64]

The strength of this belief is indicated by their lack of fear:

" . . . . Lemme go with you?"

"Of course—if you ain't afeard."

"Afeard! 'Tain't likely. . . . . "[65]

The " Nigger Jim," supreme Negro exponent of Mark Twain's folklore, knows exactly how to treat ghosts. He even orders a " ha'nt " originally feared, back to its *locale*:

. . . . he drops down on his knees, and puts his hands together and says:

"Doan' hurt me—don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em. You go en git in de river ag'in, whah you b'longs, en doan' do nuffn to Ole Jim, 'at 'uz alwuz yo' fren'."[66]

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[62] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 174.
[63] *Ibid.*, "Tom Sawyer Detective," p. 174 f.
[64] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 59.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[66] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 58.

Jim argues with a second ghost that appears to him:

> "I hain't ever done you no harm. You know that. So, then, what you want to come back and ha'nt *me* for?" [67]

Jim knew that the best way to keep ghosts from " ha'nting " him was to avoid curious discussion of the dead, particularly when a corpse had not been buried. Huck learned from him:

> . . . . I wanted to talk about the dead man and guess out how he come to be killed, but Jim didn't want to. . . . . he said, he might come and ha'nt us; he said a man that warn't buried was more likely to go a ha'nting around than one that was planted and comfortable. . . . . [68]

But even before this the boys had been shy in the presence of dead people. In graveyards they had a vague fear of getting into some sort of trouble:

> "Tom, I don't like to fool around much where there's dead people. A body's bound to get into trouble with 'em, sure."
>
> "I don't like to stir 'em up, either. . . . . " [69]

Sudden respect, arising from their fear of spirits, also appears in their speech about the dead:

> "Hucky, do you believe the dead people like it for us to be here?"
>
> Huckleberry whispered:
>
> "I wisht I knowed. It's awful solemn like, *ain't* it?"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Say, Hucky—do you reckon Hoss Williams hears us talking?"
>
> "O' course he does. Least his sperrit does."
>
> Tom, after a pause:
>
> "I wish I'd said *Mister* Williams. But I never meant any harm. Everybody calls him Hoss."
>
> "A body can't be too partic'lar how they talk 'bout these yer dead people, Tom." [70]

Tom is nearly always less superstitious than Huck. When the boys see " devil-fire " coming, he exclaims reassuringly:

> "Oh, don't be afeard. *I* don't believe they'll bother us. We ain't doing any harm. . . . . " [71]

Huck disapproves of free-and-easy rejection of certain traditional beliefs about ghosts. A soliloquy reveals his personal belief in " revengeful " spirits. When Tom scoffs at

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 312.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[69] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 207.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

one of Jim's pronouncements and at Huck's defense of the old Negro, calling both of them "ignorant superstitious blatherskites," Huck goes off muttering darkly:

> . . . . Yes, and he'll git come up with, one of these days, I says to myself, insulting ghosts that way. They'll stand it for a while, maybe, but they won't stand it always, for anybody that knows about ghosts knows how easy they are hurt, and how revengeful they are.[72]

Popular thought of the day had it that these supernatural creatures were endowed with the highest order of intelligence and cleverness in carrying out their designs:

> " . . . Why, *sperits* couldn't 'a' done better and been no smarter. And I reckon they must 'a' *been* sperits— . . . . "[73]

In the tenebrous dusk of the graveyard, the boys fearsomely recalled that "they [spirits] can see in the dark, same as cats."[74]

To modern minds the spirits may seem inconsistent in hovering about graveyards, for one may presume there would have been in almost every village "burying ground," a cross of some sort. And ghosts "'ain't a-going to come around where there's a cross!"[75] This belief is so deeply fixed in the minds of Tom and Huck that they dismiss all fear in hunting a box of money which otherwise they would have considered haunted:

> "Looky here, Huck, what fools we're making of ourselves! Injun Joe's ghost ain't a-going to come around where there's a cross!"
>
> The point was well taken. It had its effect.
>
> "Tom, I didn't think of that. But that's so. It's luck for us, that cross is, I reckon we'll climb down there and have a hunt for that box."[76]

Hunting of treasure-trove must be governed by certain "old traditions," as Tom explained to Huck:

> " . . . . You got to find out where the shadow of the limb falls at midnight, and that's where you dig!"
>
> . . . . . .

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[72] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 69.
[73] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 388.
[74] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 83.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 275.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

> The boys were there that night, about the appointed time. They sat in the shadow waiting. It was . . . . an hour made solemn by old traditions. . . . . By and by they judged that twelve had come; they marked where the shadow fell, and began to dig. . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Well, but we *can't* be wrong. We spotted the shadder to a dot."
>
> "I know it, but then there's another thing. . . . . Why, we only guessed at the time. Like enough it was too late or too early."
>
> Huck dropped his shovel.
>
> "That's it," said he. "That's the very trouble. We've got to give this one up. We can't ever tell the right time, ... " [77]

Tom knew, too, that " They always bury it [hidden treasure] under a ha'nted house," [78] but, more definitely, " mostly under the floor in ha'nted houses." [79] Ordinarily Tom and Huck would not venture near one of these structures, except in broad daylight:

> " . . . . They [ha'nts] won't hender us from digging there in the daytime."
>
> "Well, that's so. But you know mighty well people don't go about that ha'nted house in the day nor the night." [80]

The primary reason for avoidance of haunted houses is that someone has been murdered in them, and everyone stays away, " mostly because they don't like to go where a man's been murdered, anyway." [81] The boys themselves concur in this superstition, and usually " give the haunted house a wide berth" [82] when their footsteps have taken them in that direction.

After the boys' discovery of treasure in a haunted house had become known, however, superstitions about these structures must have been largely discredited, for

> . . . . Every "haunted" house in St. Petersburg and the neighboring villages was dissected, plank by plank, and its foundations dug up and ransacked for hidden treasure—and not by boys, but men—pretty grave, unromantic men, too, some of them. . . . . [83]

The deserted yard surrounding one haunted house provided

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[77] *Ibid.*, p. 205 f.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 201.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 200.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 207 f.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 285.

a duelling ground *par excellence* in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*,[84] while at the same time the house was a "roostin'" place for Roxy, when she could not "'ford to roos' nowhers' else."[85] Mark Twain describes it as

> . . . . a two-story log house which had acquired the reputation a few years before of being haunted, and that was the end of its usefulness. Nobody would live in it afterward, or go near it by night, and most people even gave it a wide berth in the daytime. As it had no competition, it was called *the* haunted house. It was getting crazy and ruinous now from long neglect. . . . . It was the last house in the town at that end.[86]

But even Roxy did not stay there regularly; instead, she "would call at the haunted house once a month for her money,"[87] and to see her son, who "was always at the haunted house to have a chat with her on these occasions. Every now and then she paid him a visit there on between-days also."[88] She had previously asked him: "Is you 'feared o' de ha'nted house?" But he — just informed of his Negro blood — was hesitant in his reply: "N-no."[89] Later, however, he made this rendezvous a sort of base for thieving operations, and once "arrived at the haunted house in disguise,"[90] later hurrying back to it "by the obscurest route he knew."[91]

French ghosts in *Joan of Arc* haunted a room in a big house with very thick walls. The place "had been left unoccupied for nobody knew how many years, because of its evil repute."[92] But inside the large room it was plain that

> . . . . the wall at this end was built in some bygone time to make and fence off a narrow room there. There is no communication anywhere with that narrow room, and if it exists— . . . . it has no light and no air, but is an absolute dungeon. . . . .[93]

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[84] *Op. cit.*, p. 270: "The Judge and his second found the rest of the war party at the further end of the vacant ground, near the haunted house." *Ibid.*, p. 271: "He placed the Judge sixty feet from the haunted house and facing it; . . . . the twins within fifteen feet of the house."

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 69 f.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[92] *Joan of Arc*, I, 242 f.

[93] *Ibid.*, I, 243.

From that space the noises came, but when it was broken into:

> Nothing there but vacancy! On the floor lay a rusty sword and a rotten fan.[94]

Tom and Huck explored "the old ha'nted house up the Still-House branch," and found that

> . . . . there was something so weird and grisly about the dead silence that reigned there under the baking sun, and something so depressing about the loneliness and desolation of the place, that they were afraid, for a moment, to venture in. Then they crept to the door and took a trembling peep. They saw a weed-grown, floorless room, unplastered, an ancient fireplace, vacant windows, a ruinous staircase; and here, there, and everywhere hung ragged and abandoned cobwebs. . . . .[95]

"De sta'r-steps is broke down" in Roxy's and Tom Driscoll's meeting place[96]; this seems a common feature of haunted houses. "Dust and cobwebs,"[97] too, seem necessary to create the authentic atmosphere of an haunted house. In the old French room

> . . . . The dusty cobwebs under the ceiling had the look of not having had any business for a century.[98]

Apparently this particular haunt was of such potency and antiquity that even the spiders had departed!

Tom Sawyer had his superstitions, but at times, as has been previously noted, he distrusted certain of the popular beliefs. He suspected, for instance, that the house on the branch was not haunted:

> ". . . . nothing's ever been seen around that house except in the night—just some blue lights slipping by the windows—no regular ghosts."

To Huck the blue lights were definite proof of haunts:

> "Well, where you see one of them blue lights flickering around, Tom, you can bet there's a ghost mighty close behind it. It stands to reason. Becuz *you* know that they don't anybody but ghosts use 'em."
>
> "Yes, that's so. . . . ."[99]

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[94] *Ibid.*, I, 245.
[95] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 211.
[96] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 68.
[97] *Sketches New and Old*, "A Ghost Story," p. 257.
[98] *Joan of Arc*, I, 243.
[99] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 208.

Mark Twain implants this superstition in Eve — theoretically before there could be ghosts — when she was trying to bore a hole in one stick with another:

> . . . . A thin, transparent bluish film rose out of the hole, and I dropped everything and ran! I thought it was a spirit, and I *was* so frightened! But I looked back, and it was not coming; . . . . [100]

In *Life on the Mississippi* the "faint glow of the specter steamer's lights" had been seen, it was said, "drifting through the distant gloom." [101] The "spirit light" phenomenon is described more fully in a "ghost story" frankly designated as such:

> . . . . Three little spheres of soft phosphorescent light appeared on the ceiling directly over my head, clung and glowed there a moment, and then dropped—two of them upon my face and one upon the pillow. . . . . [102]

Next they went through a mysterious metamorphosis:

> . . . . They spattered, liquidly, and felt warm. Intuition told me they had turned to gouts of blood as they fell—I needed no light to satisfy myself of that. . . . . [103]

Immediately afterward, Mr. Clemens saw "pallid faces, dimly luminous, and white uplifted hands, floating bodiless in the air." [104] Shakingly he lit the gas, but the "broad gas-flame" soon "dwindled to a sickly blue, and all things about me lay in a spectral twilight. . . . . A pale glow stole over the Thing." [105]

There was a mysterious room in the tavern of the town in which Tom and Huck lived and

> . . . . The tavern-keeper's young son . . . . had made the most of the mystery by entertaining himself with the idea that that room was "ha'nted"; had noticed that there was a light in there the night before.[106]

The boys, speculating about possibilities of treasure-trove in the haunted house, worked themselves to such a pitch that

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[100] *The $30,000 Bequest*, "Eve's Diary," p. 369.
[101] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 158.
[102] *Sketches New and Old*, "A Ghost Story," p. 260.
[103] *Ibid.*, "A Ghost Story," p. 260.
[104] *Ibid.*, "A Ghost Story," p. 260.
[105] *Ibid.*, "A Ghost Story," p. 261.
[106] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 222.

they were "half expecting to see a blue light flit past a window."[107]

In one of his volumes of rambling travel-essays Mark Twain suggests the theory that the spirit-light superstition may have a physical explanation:

> . . . . On damp, murky nights, these scattered skeletons gave forth a soft, hideous glow, like very faint spots of moonlight starring the vague desert. It was because of the phosphorus in the bones. But no scientific explanation could keep a body from shivering when he drifted by one of those ghostly lights and knew that a skull held it.[108]

One of his ghost stories tells of the pursuit of a raft by an haunted barrel:

> " . . . . And every time the lightning come, there was that bar'l, with the blue lights winking around it. . . . . "[109]

Mark Twain sets this before the reader as an authentic tale, told in the course of a night's talk on a raft. The crew of the raft, coarse rivermen, had been talking of other subjects, but

> . . . . from that they went into ghosts and told about a lot that other folks had seen; but Ed says:
>
> "Why don't you tell something that you've seen yourselves? Now let me have a say. Five years ago I was on a raft as big as this, ... "[110]

There followed the story of the haunted barrel.[111] "Ed" and a Dick Allbright had noticed a speck on the river in the distance; it gained on the raft, and Dick said: "I've seen it before; lots has seen it; they says it's a ha'nted bar'l."[112]

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[107] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[108] *Roughing It*, I, 88.

[109] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 26.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[111] The whole passage is an incidental inclusion of the author's, "By way of illustrating keelboat talk and manners." (*Life on the Mississippi*, p. 19.) Mark Twain says it is "a chapter from a book which I have been working at, by fits and starts, during the past five or six years, and may possibly finish in the course of five or six more. The book is a story which details some passages in the life of an ignorant village boy, Huck Finn, son of the town drunkard of my time out West, there." Inasmuch as the general situation is one reproduced in *Huckleberry Finn*, it may be assumed that it is this book of which he is speaking. The episode does not appear in any other volume of his narratives, however, than *Life on the Mississippi*.

[112] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 25.

It took up a position abreast of the raft, and floated there. Soon a storm came on, and one of the crew sprained his ankle. "Toward dawn" the barrel disappeared. The next night it came at about half past nine; another man tripped and sprained his ankle; toward day it left. Again it came the next night, bringing a second storm. This time lightning killed two men, and two were crippled by spraining their ankles! Toward dawn, as usual, the barrel went away during a dark interlude between lightnings. The next morning, everyone on the raft was watching, and

> . . . . Down she comes, slow and steady, and settles into her old tracks. You could 'a' heard a pin drop. Then up comes the captain, and says:
>
> "Boys, don't be a pack of children and fools; I don't want this bar'l to be dogging us all the way to Orleans, and *you* don't: Well, then, how's the best way to stop it? Burn it up—that's the way. I'm going to fetch it aboard," he says. And before anybody could say a word, in he went.
>
> He swum to it, and as he come pushing it to the raft, the men spread to one side. But the old man got it aboard and busted in the head, and there was a baby in it! Yes, sir; a stark-naked baby. It was Dick Allbright's baby; he owned up and said so.
>
> "Yes," he says, a-leaning over it, "yes, it is my own lamented darling, my poor lost Charles William Allbright deceased," says he—for he could curl his tongue around the bulliest words in the language when he was a mind to, and lay them before you without a jint started anywheres. Yes, he said, he used to live up at the head of this bend, and one night he choked his child, which was crying, not intending to kill it—which was prob'ly a lie—and then he was scared, and buried it in a bar'l, before his wife got home, and off he went, and struck the northern trail and went to rafting; and this was the third year that the bar'l had chased him. He said the bad luck always begun light, and lasted till four men was killed, and then the bar'l didn't come any more after that. . . . . [113]

Invariably it was on the third appearance of the "bar'l" that death came; and according to "Nigger Jim" this was the regular belief about all ghosts:

> "She's dah ag'in, Mars Tom, she's dah ag'in, en I knows I's gwine to die, 'case when a body sees a ghos' de third time, dat's what it means. . . . . " [114]

Jim had seen the ghost of the lake "twiste" before this

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[113] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[114] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 69.

time, " 'en dat's proof " of its existence, he said.[115] Huck Finn corroborated Jim's statement:

> He wouldn't look no more, and what he said made me afraid, too, because I knowed it was true, for that has always been the way with ghosts; so then I wouldn't look any more, either. . . . .[116]

In an autobiographical passage in one of his works Mark Twain relates an incident which illustrates vividly the degree of belief placed in ghosts when he was a boy:

> . . . . I was a small boy at the time; and I saw those giddy young ladies come tiptoeing into the room where Miss ———— sat reading at midnight by a lamp. The girl at the head of the file wore a shroud and a doughface; she crept behind the victim, touched her on the shoulder, and she looked up and screamed, and then fell into convulsions. She did not recover from the fright, but went mad. In these days it seems incredible that people believed in ghosts so short a time ago. But they did.[117]

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[117] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 433.

III

DEMONOLOGY

That Mark Twain's writings are replete with autobiographical matter is evident from even a cursory examination. The Hawkins family's "lagging dragging journey" out of Tennessee is a close parallel, surely, of his own family's emigration; and a passage from *The Gilded Age* which details the Hawkins removal, may well provide an introduction to the study of Mark Twain's devil lore:

> . . . . it was a wonder and delight to the children, a world of enchantment; and they believed it to be peopled with the mysterious dwarfs and giants and gohlins that figured in the tales the negro slaves were in the habit of telling them nightly by the shuddering light of the kitchen fire.[1]

The Mardi-Gras, famous New Orleans festival, incorporates in its revels creatures from the traditional demonology of the Southland. Mark Twain describes the festival as

> . . . . of course a relic of the French and Spanish occupation; but I judge that the religious feature has been pretty well knocked out of it now. . . . . medieval business, supplemented by the monsters and the oddities, and the pleasant creatures from fairyland, ... [2]

has replaced the "reveling rabble" of the priest's promotion. Mark Twain speaks particularly of the procession of "the Mystic Crew of Comus," which included "all manner of giants, dwarfs, monstrosities, and other diverting grotesquerie." [3]

The traditionary "devil" of superstition is believed to be able to assume any desired form. May this not account for the variety of hobgoblins? In a rather personal essay-sketch, Mark Twain declared:

> " . . . . If my most pitiless enemy could appear before me at this moment, I would freely right any wrong I may have done him."
>
> Straightway the door opened, and a shriveled, shabby dwarf entered. He was not more than two feet high. He seemed to be about forty years old. Every feature and every inch of him was a trifle out of shape; and so, while one could not put his finger upon any particular part and say, "This is a conspicuous deformity," the spectator perceived that this little person was a

[1] *The Gilded Age*, I, 19.
[2] *Life on the Mississippi*, pp. 373 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

> deformity as a whole—a vague, general, evenly blended, nicely adjusted deformity. There was a fox-like cunning in the face and the sharp little eyes, and also alertness and malice. . . . .[4]

Mark Twain adds one distinctly Continental characteristic to the dwarf he is presenting:

> . . . . One thing about him struck me forcibly and most unpleasantly: he was covered all over with a fuzzy, greenish mold, such as one sometimes sees upon mildewed bread. The sight of it was nauseating.[5]

This creature turns out to be the author's Conscience, materialized, but soon loses significance as folklore, for later appearances show him to have been created solely for purposes of the narrative.

In an earlier century, so another tale unfolds, the false prince, Tom Canty, dreamed that he was playing alone

> . . . . when a dwarf, only a foot high, with long red whiskers and a humped back, appeared to him suddenly and said, "Dig, by that stump." He did so, and found twelve bright new pennies—wonderful riches! Yet this was not the best of it; for the dwarf said:
>
> "I know thee. Thou art a good lad and deserving; thy distresses shall end, for the day of thy reward is come. Dig here every seventh day, and thou shalt find always the same treasure, twelve bright new pennies. Tell none—keep the secret."
>
> Then the dwarf vanished, ...[6]

The dwarf form is merely one of many supernatural shapes assumed by demons. In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, " the masters of the castle " who held medieval princesses in confinement were:

> . . . . three stupendous brothers, each with four arms and one eye—the eye in the center of the forehead, and as big as a fruit. . . . .[7]

But it was " usually a giant "[8] who held the fair damsels within his castle walls.

A still more fanciful creature than any of these is found in *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* in the form of a forest denizen whose origin is almost indistinguishable in the mists of antiquity:

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[4] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," pp. 303 f.

[5] *Ibid.*, "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut," p. 304.

[6] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 98.

[7] *A Connecticut Yankee*, pp. 82 f.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

> . . . . in still earlier times prodigious dragons that spouted fire and poisonous vapors from their nostrils had their homes in there. In fact, one was still living in there in our own time. It was as long as a tree, and had a body as big around as a tierce, and scales like overlapping great tiles, and deep ruby eyes as large as a cavalier's hat, and an anchor-fluke on its tail as big as I don't know what, but very big, even unusually so for a dragon, as everybody said who knew about dragons. It was thought that this dragon was of a brilliant blue color, with gold mottlings, but no one had ever seen it, therefore this was not known to be so, it was only an opinion. . . . . As to that dragon, I always held the belief that its color was gold and without blue, for that has always been the color of dragons. That this dragon lay but a little way within the wood at one time is shown by the fact that Pierre Morel was in there one day and smelt it, and recognized it by the smell. . . . . [9]

This dragon was the " deadliest danger " known, and the narrator, supposedly an aged French nobleman telling of his youth, tells how the forest was rid of it:

> In the earliest times a hundred knights from many remote places in the earth would have gone in there one after another, to kill the dragon and get the reward, but in our time that method had gone out, and the priest had become the one that abolished dragons. Père Guillaume Fronte did it in this case. He had a procession, with candles and incense and banners, and marched around the edge of the wood and exorcised the dragon, and it was never heard of again, although it was the opinion of many that the smell never wholly passed away. . . . . I know that the creature was there before the exorcism, but whether it was there afterward or not is a thing which I cannot be so positive about.[10]

Each of these instances, although not restricted in locality to the Mississippi Valley nor to one period of time, shows Mark Twain's interest in demonology. That he went to sources, even before writing *Life on the Mississippi* (a river with which he was already intimately familiar through two decades as a steamboat pilot), is worthy of note, and indicative of the degree of authenticity which may be ascribed to his citations. From " one of the quaint chronicles " of early times he learns that Marquette, exploring,

> . . . . had been warned by the Indians that . . . . the river contained a demon "whose roar could be heard at a great distance, and who would engulf them in the abyss where he dwelt." . . . . he had a fair right to think the river's roaring demon was come.[11]

The ridicule of legend and superstition discernible in all

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[9] *Joan of Arc*, I, 7 f.
[10] *Ibid.*, I, 8 f.
[11] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 11.

Mark Twain's works is instanced here by the appearance of a monster catfish as the demon, and the fact that the explorers were warned "that the river Indians were as ferocious and pitiless as the river demon," [12] — in other words, "as a catfish."

He quotes Marryat, a writer of 1837, on the demoniac aspect of the Mississippi:

> " . . . . It is a river of desolation; . . . . you imagine it a devil, whose energies have been only overcome by the wonderful power of steam." [13]

The belief that devils may assume any desired form is further illustrated by the passage in *Joan of Arc* which tells of Cauchon's purpose in trying Joan — to "make it appear that these were no saints to whom she had done reverence, but devils in disguise." [14] The general conception of "devils" is definitely allied with religious superstition in an earlier passage of the same work:

> He had Satan in his mind, you see; and was hoping, perhaps, that by and by it could be shown that she had rendered homage to the arch enemy of God and man.[15]

Even the judges, Joan's enemies, had difficulty in fixing the responsibility, for they asked:

> " . . . . How can you know that her Voices are not of Satan, and she his mouthpiece?—for does not Satan know the secrets of men and use his knowledge for the destruction of their souls? . . . . " [16]

A commission was appointed to "visit and question Joan daily until they should find out whether her supernatural helps hailed from heaven or from hell," [17] or, "to prove," as Mark Twain says in a fragmentary and preliminary essay on the Maid of Orleans, "that she *was* commissioned of God and not of Satan." [18]

When the trial was concluded and Joan convicted, it was realized that the "King had gotten his crown by the hands

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 228.
[14] *Joan of Arc*, II, 184.
[15] *Ibid.*, II, 146.
[16] *Ibid.*, I, 157.
[17] *Ibid.*, I, 157.
[18] *Literary Essays*, "Saint Joan of Arc," p. 365.

of a person proven by the priests to have been in league with Satan and burned for it by them as a sorceress." [19] Here again the intertwining of demonology and witchcraft is evident.

Joan's affiliation with the devil had long been recognized by the English. Their soldiery was "in a demoralized condition of superstitious terror; they had become satisfied that the Maid was in league with Satan." [20] This belief, which became current early in her battle career, was soon exaggerated to the certainty

> . . . . that that creature was not mortal, but the very child of Satan, ... It was said also that some of the officers were affected by the same superstitious fears. . . . . [21]

In a reference to the migration of alligators in the Mississippi, a trace of the old idea that devils are present in animals may be observed:

> " . . . . the devils have swapped around so, ... " [22]

The application of the term "devil" to a human being is an obvious survival of the belief that devils might incarnate themselves in earthly persons to achieve their ends. Examples of such application are numerous in Mark Twain:

> " . . . . that murderin' half-breed! I'd druther they was devils a dern sight. . . . . " [23]
>
> " . . . . I've had dreams enough all night—with that patch-eyed Spanish devil going for me all through 'em—rot him!" [24]
>
> " . . . . and I come before daylight becuz I didn't want to run acrost them devils, even if they was dead." [25]
>
> . . . . "Here is a proud devil!" thought I; "here is a limb of Satan that would rather send us all to destruction . . . . " [26]
>
> " . . . . She's pure devil, that girl. . . . . " [27]

The "poor devil" epithet is most common:

> . . . . Yet, poor devil, ... [28]
>
> " . . . . Every time a poor devil has been set upon his feet . . . . " [29]

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[19] *Joan of Arc*, II, 286.
[20] *Ibid.*, I, 196.
[21] *Ibid.*, I, 227.
[22] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 202.
[23] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 84.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[26] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 67.
[27] *The Gilded Age*, II, 159.
[28] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 411.
[29] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 287.

> "He went away filled with fright and gratitude, poor devil! . . . . "[30]

Or, the expression may be: "It was that devil Tom."[31] Or, an Irishwoman may expostulate about a coffin "to ship that dhrunken divil to Purgatory in."[32] The thought may even be so horrible that the only adequate expression is:

> Why, this man was born a devil; . . . .[33]

A passage in *The Gilded Age* suggests personal metamorphosis into devil-form:

> " . . . . Ruth, do you believe a woman ever becomes a devil?"
> "Men do, and I don't know why women shouldn't. But I never saw one."
> "Well, Laura Hawkins comes very near it. . . . . "[34]

Again:

> "He must be the devil!"
> "More than one has thought it. . . . . "[35]
>
> The "nigger trader" was loathed by everybody. He was regarded as a sort of human devil who bought and conveyed poor helpless creatures to hell—for to our whites and blacks alike the Southern plantation was simply hell; no milder name could describe it. . . . .[36]

It is significant that Mark Twain draws on demonology for this vehement statement.

A special type of devil appearance, not likely to be experienced frequently in these days, is described by Huckleberry Finn. He tells of his "pap" in delirium tremens:

> . . . . screaming and saying there was devils a-hold of him. . . . .[37]

One propensity of the devil, that of allying human beings with himself, is quite clear from several references. Injun Joe was lying about a murder, and Tom and Huck were

> . . . . expecting every moment that the clear sky would deliver God's lightnings upon his head, and wondering to see how long the stroke was delayed. And when he had finished and still stood alive and whole, their wavering impulse to break their oath and

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[30] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 273.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 351.
[33] *Joan of Arc*, II, 199.
[34] *The Gilded Age*, II, 172.
[35] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, "A Double-Barreled Detective Story," p. 318.
[36] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 124.
[37] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 40.

> save the poor betrayed prisoner's life faded and vanished away, for plainly this miscreant had sold himself to Satan and it would be fatal to meddle with the property of such a power as that.[38]

A little later, when the half-breed Injun Joe perjured himself under oath with impunity, the boys regarded their belief as indisputably confirmed:

> Injun Joe repeated his statement, just as calmly, a few minutes afterward on the inquest, under oath; and the boys, seeing that the lightnings were still withheld, were confirmed in their belief that Joe had sold himself to the devil. He was now become, to them, the most balefully interesting object they had ever looked upon, and they could not take their fascinated eyes from his face.
>
> They inwardly resolved to watch him, nights, when opportunity should offer, in the hope of getting a glimpse of his dread master.[39]

That this belief was no manufactured superstition to suit the narrative, but an actuality, is attested by Mark Twain's repetition of the incident, thunderings and lightnings included, in his autobiography:

> . . . . By my teachings I perfectly well knew what all the wild rumpus was for—Satan had come to get Injun Joe. I had no shadow of a doubt about it. It was the proper thing when a person like Injun Joe was required in the under world, and I should have thought it strange and unaccountable if Satan had come for him in a less spectacular way. . . . .
>
> But in the morning I saw that it was a false alarm and concluded to resume business at the old stand and wait for another reminder.[40]

In *The Prince and the Pauper* a legal problem involving devils arises during the trial of a woman and child:

> " . . . . They sold themselves to the devil—such is their crime."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> " . . . . The *devil* may buy a child, if he so choose, and the child agree thereto, but not an Englishman—in this latter case the contract would be null and void."[41]

Mark Twain, in a tale of his silver-mining days, mentions a visiting journalist and story-teller who enlivened one of his tales with a character,

> . . . . a mysterious Rosicrucian who transmuted metals, held consultations with the devil in a cave at dead of night, and cast the horoscope of the several heroes and heroines . . . .[42]

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[38] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 100.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[40] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 176.
[41] *The Prince and the Pauper*, pp. 122 f.
[42] *Roughing It*, II, 77.

In a later chapter of the tale, the journalist "created a misunderstanding between the devil and the Roscicrucian," [43] and finally "opened the earth and let the Roscicrucian through, accompanied with the accustomed smoke and thunder and smell of brimstone." [44]

In *A Tramp Abroad*, a man declines to take a foolhardy risk with the remark:

> ". . . . Excuse me, there are a great many pleasanter roads to the devil than that." [45]

That the general conception of the devil's kingdom in Mark Twain is concurrent with the fire-and-brimstone idea, is indicated by the references, "to burn wid Satan" [46] and

> ". . . . so ye wander not out of his grace the Devil's sultry realm." [47]

Mr. Clemens accepted, at least for narrative purposes, the "fallen angel" theory in the passage:

> . . . . And he has fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again. . . . . [48]

Objects once in hell are plainly branded:

> "You will never see them again—they are destroyed. They came from Satan. I saw the hell-brand on them, and I knew they were sent to betray me to sin." . . . . [49]

In *Roughing It* Brigham Young pronounces Rigdon's "prophecies" to be "emanations from the devil," [50] but immediately afterward sentences him to the "buffetings of Satan for a thousand years" [51] implying thereby that Rigdon's punishment may be less severe than he deserves. Mr. Clemens is sly in introducing these subtle inconsistencies which are often greater sources of delight in his work than the obviously humorous passages.

Of devil-habits there is only the intimation found in Huck's remark:

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[43] *Ibid.*, II, 79.
[44] *Ibid.*, II, 79.
[45] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 129.
[46] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 22.
[47] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 377.
[48] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, "My Boyhood Dreams," p. 257.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[50] *Roughing It*, II, 306.
[51] *Ibid.*, II, 306.

" . . . . Devils don't slosh around much of a Sunday, I don't reckon." [52]

For that reason he and Tom felt secure in visiting the graveyard on Saturday evening before midnight. They were safe until dead midnight any day of the week, but were safe all Saturday night. However, when they see *three* figures approaching, and judge them to be devils, their feeling of security vanishes:

" . . . . Three of 'em! Lordy, Tom, we're goners! . . . . " [53]

A further insight into Mark Twain's youthful belief in devils is obtained from his narration of an experience with a lunatic, who would have killed him

. . . . unless I acknowledged him to be the only son of the Devil. . . . . I must say he was the sole and only son of the Devil— . . . . [54]

Throughout his volumes are instances of oaths in which the devil is named, as:

"Shut up, in the devil's name!" [55]
"Explain, thou limb of Satan, ... " [56]

There are degrees in swearing by the devil:

"Thousand devils!" screamed Cauchon, ... [57]
"Fifteen hundred devils!" cried I. . . . . [58]
" . . . . Open! And despatch, in the name of all the devils!" [59]

As an epithet the devil's name, perhaps with a connected phrase, is often used, as:

. . . . the unholy train . . . . with its devil's war-whoop . . . . [60]
. . . . But the old daredevil spirit was upon me, and I said that as I had committed myself I would not back down; I would ascend Mont Blanc if it cost me my life. . . . . [61]
. . . . a bit of harum-scarum, devil-may-care piloting, ... [62]
. . . . on account of a kind of devilish comfort he got out of it. . . . . [63]

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[52] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 59.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[54] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 467.
[55] *Joan of Arc*, II, 207.
[56] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 94.
[57] *Joan of Arc*, II, 262.
[58] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 283.
[59] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 175.
[60] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 474.
[61] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 181.
[62] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 123.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

> . . . . going through that sort of tight-rope deviltry the same as before.[64]

Particularly in the naming of dangerous points and landmarks on or near the Mississippi River (by the pilots, presumably), does Mark Twain show origins of devil place-names. There is a " Devil's Island " [65] and " Devil's Elbow." [66] One place, the Tower,

> . . . . has the Devil's Bake-oven— . . . . the Devil's Tea-table— . . . . Devil's Elbow and the Devil's Race-course, and lots of other property of his which I cannot now call to mind.[67]

He uses the devil in his own figures of speech:

> . . . . the piles of damp bagasse burn slowly, and smoke like Satan's own kitchen.[68]

Thus used, the word " Satan " is so common through all Mark Twain's works that it is hardly to be styled a euphemism for " the Devil," even though it might ordinarily be so classified. A mere " tin whistle " is " a veritable invention of Satan, sir," [69] to the Mormon father of many wives' children.

His mother, Mark Twain tells us, defended Satan:

> . . . . She admitted that the indictment was sound, that Satan was utterly wicked and abandoned, just as these people had said; *but* would any claim that he had been treated fairly? A sinner was but a sinner; Satan was just that, like the rest . . . . [70]

Of his own feeling toward this sinner, Mark Twain says:

> . . . . I have no special regard for Satan; but I can at least claim that I have no prejudice against him. It may even be that I lean a little his way, on account of his not having a fair show. . . . . [71]

Two clear cases of euphemism for " the Devil " do appear, however, and in both instances it is Tom Sawyer's aunts who voice them: Aunt Polly, in Missouri, declares, " He's full of the Old Scratch," [72] and Aunt Sally, near Pikesville, down the river, fumes, " I lay I'll tan the Old Harry out o' both o' ye!" [73]

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 208 f.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[69] *Roughing It*, I, 106.
[70] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 117.
[71] *Literary Essays*, "Concerning the Jews," p. 264.
[72] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 3.
[73] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 398.

IV

WITCHCRAFT

"The veritable Witch of Endor" is the oldest representative of the weird sisterhood to be found in Mark Twain's works. When he visited the Holy Land as a member of the *Quaker City* excursion, in 1867, one of the celebrated sights was "Endor, famous for its witch."[1] This first round-the-world tourist party saw the

> . . . . mouth of the dismal cavern once occupied by the veritable Witch of Endor. In this cavern, tradition says, Saul, the King, sat at midnight, and stared and trembled, while the earth shook, the thunders crashed among the hills, and out of the midst of fire and smoke the spirit of the dead prophet rose up and confronted him. Saul had crept to this place in the darkness, while his army slept, to learn what fate awaited him in the morrow's battle. He went away a sad man, to meet disgrace and death.[2]

The traditions about witches retain certain fixed features through the ages, and of these Mark Twain's witchcraft reveals an intimate and complete knowledge. As old a witch as Endor's dwelt in a cavern; while the thunderings and lightnings, storm, and midnight hour are still customary accompaniments of a visit to a witch.

Mark Twain's next witch (in period of setting, not date of composition) is of the early sixth century, in the England of King Arthur and the Round Table:

> . . . . A mob . . . . said she was a witch who had caused several cows to die by a strange disease, and practised her arts by help of a devil in the form of a black cat. . . . . The mob wanted to burn her.[3]

The relationship of demonology and witchcraft is apparent even in this relic.[4] Belief in a devil's ability to assume any desired shape is seen recurring here.

It must be acknowledged that Mark Twain could have known witches of remote historical periods only at second hand, and that his sketches of them may possibly contain

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[1] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 276.
[2] *Ibid.*, II, 277.
[3] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 357.
[4] See Introduction, p. 7.

elements of contemporary witchcraft. But it must also be remembered that his interest in witches, as in all branches of folklore, was almost scientific, as has been indicated in the introduction to this study.

In the essay, *Saint Joan of Arc*, Mr. Clemens brings out the fact that even in the early fifteenth century judges in The Great Trial, unable to explain the secret of the Maid's influence over her soldiers, subjected her to

> . . . . searchings . . . . to find out what kind of devil's witchcraft she had employed to rouse the war spirit in her timid soldiers, ... [5]

And at the first, before it was proved that her powers were being exercised solely for the good of France, even the French governor of her province

> . . . . had made up his mind to one thing: Joan was either a witch or a saint, and he meant to find out which it was. So he brought a priest with him to exorcise the devil that was in her in case there was one there. The priest performed his office, but found no devil. . . . . and should have known, if he knew anything, that devils cannot abide the confessional, but utter cries of anguish and the most profane and furious cursings whenever they are confronted with that holy office.[6]

Even later, when she reached him who was later to be King, his ministers were afraid, and

> . . . . argued . . . . and arrived at the decision that Joan was a witch, and had her strange pluck and strength from Satan; so they made a plan to watch for a safe opportunity and take her life.[7]

In the meantime, Joan's forces were driving the English out of their garrisons in France — not much of a task, it appears, as long as she could inspire her troops to such an extent that the English soldiers thought:

> . . . . —surely this *is* a witch, this is a child of Satan! That was their thought—and without stopping to analyze the matter they turned and fled in a panic.[8]

Occasionally in Joan's absence the English made a successful sortie, "a thing quite easy to do, since the 'Witch' would

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[5] *Literary Essays*, "Saint Joan of Arc," p. 371.
[6] *Joan of Arc*, I, 94 f.
[7] *Ibid.*, I, 110.
[8] *Ibid.*, I, 251.

not be there," [9] and "being used to victories when 'witches' were not around." [10]

The French people, however, did not consider Joan of Arc a witch, and the court must prove the charge before executing her, or the people would think her a martyr to the French cause:

> . . . . If the Church could be brought to take her life, or to proclaim her an idolater, a heretic, a witch, sent from Satan, not from heaven, it was believed that the English supremacy could be at once reinstated.[11]

Therefore, the set of charges brought before the court called her

> . . . . a sorceress, a false prophet, an invoker and companion of evil spirits, a dealer in magic, ... [12]

Her leading persecutor did not judge the evidence, but spoke his opinion before the trial, revealing his prejudice:

> "The fat Bishop . . . . says he will lead the vile witch a merry dance and a short one."[13]

It was no "short" dance, for the charges were difficult to substantiate, but in the end, "Joan had been adjudged guilty of heresy, sorcery, ... He could send her to the stake at once." [14] Under duress and through trickery she was led to put her name to a statement, and later found that

> . . . . She had signed a paper confessing herself a sorceress, a dealer with devils, a liar, ... commissioned of Satan; . . . . [15]

Of her punishment, little need be said. It was the customary

> "Scaffolds and the stake. Don't you know that the French witch is to be burned in the morning?" [16]

And finally, over the city the news is spreading:

> " . . . . *The witch's time has come!*" [17]

Mark Twain is able to be tragic no longer, cannot resist pok-

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[9] *Ibid.*, I, 218.
[10] *Ibid.*, I, 236.
[11] *Ibid.*, II, 104.
[12] *Ibid.*, II, 201.
[13] *Ibid.*, II, 123.
[14] *Ibid.*, II, 236.
[15] *Ibid.*, II, 251.
[16] *Ibid.*, II, 240.
[17] *Ibid.*, II, 258.

ing fun at dignitaries of the University of Paris and of the Church, by showing that the

> . . . . King had gotten his crown by the hands of a person proven by the priests to have been in league with Satan and burned for it by them as a sorceress— . . . . [18]

A century later, in England, the prophecy of a wandering witch is almost evidence enough to convict a stranger:

> " . . . . Many testified that a witch, since gone from the village, none know whither, did foretell, and speak it privately in their ears, that the sick man *would die by poison*—and more, that a stranger would give it—a stranger with brown hair and clothed in a worn and common garb. . . . . Please, your majesty, to give the circumstance that solemn weight which is its due, seeing it was *foretold*."
>
> This was an argument of tremendous force, in that superstitious day. . . . . [19]

Two further instances from this period indicate the penalty for being thought a witch:

> " . . . . Her gift of palmistry and other sorts of fortune-telling begot for her at last a witch's name and fame. The law roasted her to death at a slow fire. . . . . " [20]
>
> " . . . . My good old blameless mother strove to earn bread by nursing the sick; one of these died, the doctors knew not how, so my mother was burned for a witch, ... " [21]

The barbaric punishment was long in force, but in *The Prince and the Pauper* Mark Twain indicates a slight waning of belief in witchcraft. Of the previous century no such incredulity was suggested. The false and youthful King, Tom Canty, hears a case against witches and boldly exposes its lack of foundation on fact:

> "Please, your majesty, a black crime is charged upon them, and clearly proven; wherefore the judges have decreed, according to the law, that they be hanged. They sold themselves to the devil —such is their crime."
>
> Tom shuddered. He had been taught to abhor people who did this wicked thing. . . . .
>
> "Where was this done?—and when?"
>
> "On a midnight, in December—in a ruined church, your majesty."
>
> Tom shuddered again.
>
> "Who was there present?"
>
> "Only these two, your grace—and *that other*."
>
> . . . . . .

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[18] *Ibid.*, II, 286.
[19] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 120.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

> "Then, prithee, how was it known?"
> "Certain witnesses did see them wending thither, good your majesty; this bred the suspicion, and dire effects have since confirmed and justified it. In particular, it is in evidence that through the wicked power so obtained, they did invoke and bring about a storm that wasted all the region round about. Above forty witnesses have proved the storm; . . . . "[22]

But since the woman herself had been left destitute by the storm, Tom argued:

> "Methinks the power to do herself so ill a turn was dearly bought. She had been cheated, had she paid but a farthing for it; that she paid her soul, and her child's, argueth that she is mad; if she is mad she knoweth not what she doth, therefore sinneth not."[23]

He then shows that by the law, "The *devil* may buy a child, if he so choose, and the child agree thereto,"[24] while an Englishman would not have that right. He finds, too, that these two who had sold themselves brought on the storm by the simple expedient, "'*By pulling off their stockings*,'"[25] and commands that he be shown a storm. The woman protests her innocence. Tom insists that the charm be attempted, but no storm appears. His verdict is:

> "There, good soul, trouble thyself no further, thy power is departed out of thee. Go thy way in peace; and if it return to thee at any time, forget me not, but fetch me a storm."[26]

These ideas of witches are historic, and not of major consideration in Mark Twain's folklore, but the Mississippi Valley members of the craft, he knew from the Negroes — from whom, in fact, he obtained the most of his folklore. A way-South Negro, a "hand" of Tom Sawyer's Uncle Silas, thinks he sees witches:

> "Oh, it's de dad-blame' witches, sah, en I wisht I was dead, I do. Dey's awluz at it, sah, en dey do mos' kill me, dey sk'yers me so. Please to don't tell nobody 'bout it, sah, er ole Mars Silas he'll scole me; 'kase he say dey *ain't* no witches. I jis' wish to

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 126. The author refers to "The Famous Stocking Case," and cites a passage in his "Notes" (pp. 275-281) from Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull's *Blue Laws, True and False*, p. 20: "A woman and her daughter, *nine years old*, were hanged in Huntingdon for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm by pulling off their stockings!" (p. 278).

> goodness he was heah now—*den* what would he say! I jis' bet he couldn' fine no way to git aroun' it *dis* time. But it's awluz jis' so; people dat's *sot*, stays sot; dey won't look into noth'n' en fine it out f'r deyselves, en when *you* fine it out en tell um 'bout it, dey doan' b'lieve you." [27]

A northern Negro, the boys' friend, Jim, had experienced witches:

> . . . . Afterward Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the state, and then set him under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. . . . . and, after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, ... Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country. . . . . Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, "Hm! What you know 'bout witches?" and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat. . . . . Jim was most ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches.[28]

Later, marooned on a river island, Jim's belief in witches is again displayed, when Huck "fetched meal and bacon and coffee, and coffee-pot and frying-pan, and sugar and tin cups, and the nigger was set back considerable, because he reckoned it was all done with witchcraft." [29]

The witch of Negro folklore, like all others of her craft from time immemorial, held kinship with devils and possessed the common ability of both witches and demons to change her shape at will. Witness the southern Negro's second experience with the pack of dogs he thought to be witches:

> "Mars Sid, you'll say I's a fool, but if I didn't b'lieve I see most a million dogs, er devils, er some'n, I wisht I may die right heah in dese tracks. I did, mos' sholy. Mars Sid, I *felt* um—I *felt* um, sah; dey was all over me. Dad fetch it, I jis' wisht I could git my han's on one er dem witches jis' wunst—on'y jis' wunst—it's all I'd ast. But mos'ly I wisht dey'd lemme 'lone, I does." [30]

Huck saw the whole incident, and his succinct summary of it proves how firmly fixed was the belief of the colored man:

> . . . . The nigger Nat he only just hollered "Witches" once, and keeled over onto the floor amongst the dogs, and begun to groan like he was dying. . . . . [31]

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[27] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 329.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 8 f.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 346.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 345 f.

After Nat's recital of this experience, the ever-inventive Tom played on his superstition in order to further his scheme of "freeing" Jim from prison:

> Tom says:
> "Well, I tell you what *I* think. What makes them come here just at this runaway nigger's breakfast-time? It's because they're hungry; that's the reason. You make them a witch pie; that's the thing for *you* to do."[32]

The Negro Nat had never heard of such a thing, but he accepted it as a bit of witchcraft with which he was unfamiliar. His evident reluctance to touch "witch things" is the prevailing belief that evil powers are inherent in objects touched by the devil:

> "But my lan', Mars Sid, how's I gwyne to make'm a witch pie? I doan' know how to make it. I hain't ever hearn er sich a thing b'fo'."
> "Well, then, I'll have to make it myself."
> "Will you do it, honey?—will you? I'll wusshup de groun' und' yo' foot, I will!"
> "All right, I'll do it, seeing it's you, ... But you got to be mighty careful. When we come around, you turn your back; and then whatever we've put in the pan, don't you let on you see it at all. And don't you look when Jim unloads the pan—something might happen, I don't know what. And above all, don't you *handle* the witch things."
> "*Hannel* 'm, Mars Sid? What *is* you a-talkin' 'bout? I wouldn' lay de weight er my finger on um, not f'r ten hund'd thous'n billion dollars, I wouldn't."[33]

The time for the appearance of witches apparently coincides with that decreed for other supernatural beings. The Negro Nat wants the boys to accompany him on errands "more particular if it was dark, because the witches went for him mostly in the dark, and it was good to have folks around then."[34] The boys tremble at the fearsomeness of the hour when they hunt treasure at midnight. Says Huck:

> ". . . . this kind of thing's too awful, here this time of night with witches and ghosts a-fluttering around so. I feel as if something's behind me all the time; and I'm afeard to turn around, becuz maybe ther's others in front a-waiting for a chance. I been creeping all over, ever since I got here."[35]

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 346.
[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 346 f.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[35] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 206 f.

Tom at one time declares, "Shucks, witches ain't got no power in the daytime." [36]

Mark Twain uses the common figure, "I stood like one bewitched," [37] to express his admiration for a beautiful river sunset. One wonders if he realized and disregarded the word's connotation of a witch's horrible trance, feared by all superstitious peoples.

Huckleberry Finn is the authority for the only concrete information about bewitching in Mark Twain's works:

> ". . . . they say she's a witch."
> "Say! Why, Tom, I *know* she is. She witched pap. . . . . he see she was a-witching him, so he took up a rock, and if she hadn't dodged, he'd 'a' got her. Well, that very night he rolled off'n a shed wher' he was a-layin' drunk, and broke his arm."
> ". . . . How did he know she was a-witching him?"
> "Lord, pap can tell, easy. Pap says when they keep looking at you right stiddy, they're a-witching you. Specially if they mumble. Becuz when they mumble they're saying the Lord's Prayer backards." [38]

Whatever may have been the origin of the witchcraft superstitions, whatever part may have come from Africa, it is certain that the incantation used in this case cannot have been a popular belief among the Negroes before their association with the whites. It is a distinct borrowing from the Christian religion, and as such a proof that some of the Southern superstitions attributed to the ignorance of the Negro may be founded on the beliefs of his masters.

If persons have not been previously "witched" to keep them from carrying out certain projects, the witches themselves may take an active interest in the affair, and "interfere," as Tom suggested when he and Huck were unsuccessful in their treasure hunt:

> "It *is* mighty curious, Huck. I don't understand it. Sometimes witches interfere. I reckon maybe that's what's the trouble now." [39]

On another occasion Tom thought "interference" explained why one of his pet charms failed to work. He had decided to run away to sea and was collecting his belongings:

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[37] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 79.
[38] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 58.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

> . . . . He went to a rotten log near at hand and began to dig under one end of it with his Barlow knife. He soon struck wood that sounded hollow. He put his hand there and uttered this incantation impressively:
>
> "What hasn't come here, *come!* What's here, *stay* here!"
>
> Then he scraped away the dirt, and exposed a pine shingle. He took it up, and disclosed a shapely little treasure-house whose bottom and sides were of shingles. In it lay a marble. Tom's astonishment was boundless! He scratched his head with a perplexed air, and said:
>
> "Well, that beats anything!"
>
> Then he tossed the marble away pettishly, and stood cogitating. The truth was, that a superstition of his had failed, here, which he and all his comrades had always looked upon as infallible. If you buried a marble with certain necessary incantations, and left it alone a fortnight, and then opened the place with the incantation he had just used, you would find that all the marbles you had ever lost had gathered themselves together there, meantime, no matter how widely they had been separated. But, now this thing had actually and unquestionably failed. Tom's whole structure of faith was shaken to its foundations. He had many a time heard of this thing succeeding, but never of its failing before. It did not occur to him that he had tried it several times before, himself, but could never find the hiding-places afterward. He puzzled over the matter some time, and finally decided that some witch had interfered and broken the charm. He thought he would satisfy himself on that point; . . . . [40]

The charm Tom used to find out if a witch had interfered proved efficacious:

> . . . . so he searched around till he found a small sandy spot with a little funnel-shaped depression in it. He laid himself down and put his mouth close to this depression and called:
>
> "Doodle-bug, doodle-bug, tell me what I want to know! Doodle-bug, doodle-bug, tell me what I want to know!"
>
> The sand began to work, and presently a small black bug appeared for a second and then darted under again in a fright.
>
> "He dasn't tell! So it *was* a witch that done it. I just knowed it."
>
> He well knew the futility of trying to contend against witches, so he gave up discouraged. . . . . [41]

In spite of the general fear of witches, occasions were conceivable on which their presence might actually be desired. At least, that is the implication from Jim's pride in the coin he thought witches had given him, but which in reality had come from the boys:

> . . . . Jim always kept that five-center piece round his neck with a string, and said it was a charm the devil give him with his own hands, and told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch

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[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 75 f.
[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 76 f.

> witches whenever he wanted to just by saying something to it; but he never told what it was he said to it. Niggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just for a sight of that five-center piece; but they wouldn't touch it, because the devil had had his hands on it. . . . . [42]

The fear of touching anything the devil has touched seems a rather prevalent taboo.

Charms and fetishes and rigamaroles to keep witches away are common. "Aunt" Hannah, who was "superstitious, like the other negroes," [43] had in common with the others of her race, "great faith in prayer and employed it in all ordinary exigencies, but not in cases where a dead certainty of result was urgent," for

> . . . . Whenever witches were around she tied up the remnant of her wool in little tufts, with white thread, and this promptly made the witches impotent.[44]

Huck Finn took this precaution, with an added bit of ritual, to insure his safety:

> . . . . I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. . . . . [45]

This fetish was apparently widespread, for the way-South Negro, Nat, dressed his hair in the same fashion:

> . . . . his wool was all tied up in little bunches with thread. That was to keep witches off. He said the witches was pestering him awful these nights, and making him see all kinds of strange things, and hear all kinds of strange words and noises, and he didn't believe he was ever witched so long before in his life. . . . . [46]

Tom Sawyer, Huck says, once gave Nat a dime, "and told him to buy some more thread to tie up his wool with." [47]

People as superstitious as these were "easy meat" for traveling rogues, like the king and the duke encountered by Huck and Jim on one of their journeys. The duke, for instance, had show bills printed in which

> . . . . he had a lot of other names and done other wonderful things, like finding water and gold with a "divining-rod," "dissipating witch spells," and so on. . . . . [48]

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[42] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 8 f.
[43] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 99 f.
[44] *Ibid.*, I, 100.
[45] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 5.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 327.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Mark Twain does not confine his references to witchcraft to the sorcerers of his own Mississippi Valley. From Major Sleeman's book on India he paraphrases a superstition linked with marriage:

> . . . . In his day [Sleeman's] witches abounded, and it was not thought good business wisdom for a man to marry his daughter into a family that hadn't a witch in it, for she would need a witch on the premises to protect her children from the evil spells which would certainly be cast upon them by the witches connected with the neighboring families.[49]

But Mark Twain is more at home in his own front yard ("as the sayin' is"), particularly in citations of the Negroes' superstitious beliefs. Roxy is frightened by Pudd'nhead Wilson's fingerprinting, and "reckons":

> " . . . . *I* b'lieve he's a witch. But nemmine, ... But I reckon I'll take along a hoss-shoe to keep off de witch work."[50]

She is not pure Negro, and Pudd'nhead's comment on her caution reflects rather accurately, one may presume, Mark Twain's own attitude toward the mulatto:

> . . . . "The drop of black blood in her is superstitious; she thinks there's some devilry, some witch business about my glass mystery somewhere; she used to come here with an old horseshoe in her hand; it could have been an accident, but I doubt it."[51]

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[49] *Following the Equator*, II, 140.
[50] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 24.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

V

LUCK AND UNLUCK

To the superstitious, success is dependent upon "luck," and failure may result if luck is unfavorable. In Mark Twain, a person may be permanently destitute of luck as "the luckless Duke of Norfolk,"[1] or only temporarily forsaken, as "a pilot who was 'out of luck'."[2] There was also a time "'when I [Huck] was out of luck.'"[3] Sometimes there are longer periods of "no luck," such as:

> "But I didn' have no luck. . . . ."[4]
> . . . . but they couldn't seem to have no luck. . . . .[5]
> ". . . . He gave me the wheel once or twice, but I had no luck. . . . ."[6]

In Mark Twain the expression, "good luck," is rare; the word "luck" alone implies fortune that is acceptable. In one case, however, two men got hold of "something with money in it, ... by good luck."[7] In another instance, just as

> . . . . misfortunes never come one at a time, but in a body. . . . . it was the same with good luck. Having got a start, it came flooding in, tide after tide. . . . . Oh, yes, wave on wave the good luck came sweeping in. . . . .[8]

Mark Twain says whimsically in an autobiographical reference to his father, that he "'kept store' . . . . several years, but had no luck, except that I was born to him."[9] A person may also be "in luck,"[10] or perhaps only partially so, like a miner who "hadn't a cent the next morning, if he had any sort of luck."[11] It appears that between a white and an octoroon baby there was a variance in degree of "luck," for Roxy, nurse and mother, cries:

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[1] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 52.
[2] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 130.
[3] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 190.
[4] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 62.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 290.
[6] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 46.
[7] *The Gilded Age*, II, 168.
[8] *Joan of Arc*, I, 169.
[9] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 6.
[10] *The Gilded Age*, II, 317.
[11] *Roughing It*, II, 133.

> "What has my po' baby done, dat he couldn't have yo' luck? He hain't done noth'n'. God was good to you; why warn't he good to him? . . . . "[12]

It is evidently a matter of being born lucky. There is such a thing, according to Clemens, who says of a man:

> . . . . He has been pursued, day by day and year by year, by a most phenomenal and astonishing luckiness. . . . . proof that the very best thing in all this world that can befall a man is to be born lucky. . . . .[13]

"Nigger Jim," admitting that he is not lucky, tells of an acquaintance of his, a "chucklehead" (which may account for it):

> " . . . . he's lucky, dey say, en I see I warn't lucky. . . . . "[14]

Even in fifteenth-century France one person is said by another to be the "pet child of luck":

> "And think of his luck!" burst out Noël. . . . . "Always the pet child of luck! See how it followed him and stayed by him, from his first step all through, in the field or out of it; . . . . and at last —supremest luck of all—died in the field! . . . . What luck, what luck! And we? What was our sin that we are still here, we who have also earned our place with the happy dead?"[15]

Mere "luck" seems ever welcome, a good reason why it may be assumed to carry the connotation of "good luck." Witness Tom and Huck on seeing actual treasure before them:

> . . . . With gloating eyes they watched every movement. Luck! —the splendor of it was beyond all imagination! . . . .[16]

Tom, lost in the cave with Becky, shouts simply "for luck"[17] — at least so he tells her. Clemens speaks of "storms which I have had the luck to see in the Alps,"[18] as well as of the safe trip of an unpiloted boat as "only luck,"[19] and "a lucky piece of sagacity in us."[20] He remarks of a perilous crisis that "it happened luckily that the crew"[21] was fortuitously engaged.

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[12] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 18.
[13] *The American Claimant*, "Luck," pp. 288 f.
[14] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 65.
[15] *Joan of Arc*, II, 110.
[16] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 215.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[18] *Life on the Mississippi*, pp. 407 f.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[20] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 174.
[21] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 308.

There are degrees of luck: "the luckiest accident that ever happened," [22] and "this gigantic piece of luck." [23] But luck alone is not always responsible for success. Mark Twain writes in one instance, "Well, we could but do our best, and let luck and fate decide what should happen," [24] and in another case it is "a combination of luck and care." [25]

Over Joan of Arc hung a different species of luck:

> . . . . the protecting luck which attends upon ignorance and innocence, ... [26]

Unluck was thought to possess an almost human malignity. When "luck's against us," Jim says to Huck,

> " . . . . if we didn't try hard to make out to understand them warnings that would come every now and then they'd just take us into bad luck, 'stead of keeping us out of it. . . . . " [27]

Negative luck was usually designated in Mark Twain as "ill luck":

> . . . . Hadleyburg had the ill luck to offend a passing stranger— . . . . [28]
>
> . . . . They were too much absorbed in hating . . . . the ill luck that made them take the spade and pick there. . . . . [29]
>
> Tuesday the boys had the same ill luck. Also Wednesday. But Thursday night promised better. . . . . [30]
>
> . . . . I was manifestly endowed with the very genius of ill luck. . . . . [31]
>
> . . . . I had no ill luck myself, but none of my cousins escaped. . . . . [32]

Sixteenth century English dialect — Mark Twain held high standards for his dialects — probably accounts for Miles Hendon's muttered, "Now is my evil luck ended at last." [33]

Washington Hawkins, in Washington, D. C., was pursued by "hard luck":

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[23] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, p. 66.
[24] *Joan of Arc*, II, 113.
[25] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 93.
[26] *Joan of Arc*, II, 141.
[27] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 118.
[28] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, p. 2.
[29] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 218 f. "Bitter, bitter luck," it was.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 224.
[31] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 26.
[32] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 106.
[33] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 266.

> " . . . . I am become so used to troubles, ... hard luck of all kinds, ... Don't you see how our bad luck has worked on me? My hair is getting gray, ... "[34]

The strongest adjective in all Mark Twain's works occurs in the verbal explosion of a man who could not get a ticket to one of Mr. Clemens' lectures: " It's just my God damned luck."[35]

Another kind of luck, mentioned by the Welshman in *Tom Sawyer*, is " meanest ":

> " . . . . just then I found I was going to sneeze. It was the meanest kind of luck! . . . . "[36]

No specific " lucky days " are listed in Mark Twain, but certain passages definitely imply their existence. Friday, for instance, is held to be unlucky:

> . . . . Tom was impatient to go to the haunted house; Huck was measurably so, also—but suddenly said:
>
> "Lookyhere, Tom, do you know what day it is?"
>
> Tom mentally ran over the days of the week, and then quickly lifted his eyes with a startled look in them—
>
> "My! I never once thought of it, Huck!"
>
> "Well, I didn't neither, but all at once it popped onto me that it was Friday."
>
> "Blame it, a body can't be too careful, Huck. We might 'a' got into an awful scrape, tackling such a thing on a Friday."
>
> "*Might!* Better say we *would!* There's some lucky days, maybe, but Friday ain't."
>
> "Any fool knows that. I don't reckon *you* was the first that found it out, Huck."
>
> "Well, I never said I was, did I? And Friday ain't all, neither. . . . . "[37]

For Huck has dreamed of rats, too.

> "No! Sure sign of trouble. Did they fight?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Well, that's good, Huck. When they don't fight it's only a sign that there's trouble around, you know. All we got to do is to look mighty sharp and keep out of it. We'll drop this thing for to-day, and play. . . . . "[38]

And play they did, but close enough to the haunted house to keep a " yearning eye " upon it. When at last they actually visited the place they heard Injun Joe and his accomplice talking about them, and they

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[34] *The Gilded Age*, II, 208.
[35] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 201.
[36] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 240.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 209 f.

> . . . . quaked again under the inspiration of this remark, and thought how lucky it was that they had remembered it was Friday and concluded to wait a day. They wished in their hearts they had waited a year.[39]

The thought that one man's good luck may be another's bad, is suggested seriously in Mr. Clemens' reference to "a charming mansion. . . . which, by good luck, we had gotten hold of through another man's ill luck," [40] and rather facetiously in a remark that his father-in-law had

> . . . . just barely escaped once the good luck—or the bad luck—of becoming a great railway magnate. . . . . [41]

He uses a similar parody as a literary device:

> . . . . New Orleans, I believe, has had the good luck—and in a sense the bad luck—to have had no great fire in late years. . . . . [42]

That Mark Twain "believed in luck," the following personal observation, "speaking from the grave," [43] tends to indicate:

> Persons who think there is no such thing as luck—good or bad—are entitled to their opinion. Clara Spaulding had the average being's luck in all things save one; she was subject to ill luck with horses. It pursued her like a disease. . . . . [44]

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[40] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 154.

[41] *Ibid.*, II, 126.

[42] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 341.

[43] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, preface, xv. His phrase for writing the *Autobiography*, inasmuch as he had ordered that the book should not be printed until a specified period after his death, was "speaking from the grave."

[44] *Ibid.*, II, 140. Material published in the two volumes of the *Autobiography* is of two kinds, and of two periods. Through page 265, Volume I, the material is edited from his own manuscripts, prepared at various times, beginning as early as 1870. Beyond this point the autobiography was dictated by Mr. Clemens, beginning January 9, 1906. This quotation about "Persons who think there is no such thing as luck," is dated Monday, February 26, 1906.

VI

SIGNS, PORTENTS, OMENS

Intimately associated with luck and unluck in Mark Twain's folklore are certain control-signs, "beliefs in causal relationships which modern science show to be incorrect."[1] A few of these are positive; that is, are methods to summon favorable luck, but the remainder (the more numerous) are negative, and, to the degree that ill luck is undesirable, constitute taboos. In all the idea of personal intervention is foremost; but there are also groups of signs which imply certainty transcending human control.

"Nigger Jim" took occasion to warn Huck about certain negative control-signs when the two were voluntarily marooned on the island, and Huck's meditations, coupled with the closing remarks of Jim's dissertation, reveal the popular belief:

> I had heard about some of these things before, but not all of them. Jim knowed all kinds of signs. He said he knowed most everything. I said it looked to me like all the signs was about bad luck, and so I asked him if there warn't any good-luck signs. He says:
>
> "Mighty few—an' *dey* ain't no use to a body. What you want to know when good luck's a-comin' for? Want to keep it off? . . . . "[2]

Roxy wondered, "What has my po' baby done, dat he couldn't have yo' luck?" and in the same breath realized hopelessly, "He hain't done noth'n."[3]

Joan of Arc's judges tried to show that she was in league with the devil, by questions which would prove that she had used control-signs to bring on luck:

> "Did you not say to your men that pennons made like your banner would be lucky?"[4]

And again:

> "Didn't you lay it upon the altar, to the end that it [a sword] might be lucky?" (The altar of St. Denis.)
>
> "No."
>
> "Didn't you pray that it might be made lucky?"[5]

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[1] N. N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, p. 312.
[2] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 63.
[3] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 18.
[4] *Joan of Arc*, II, 176.
[5] *Ibid.*, II, 155.

Praying for luck was considered sacrilegious: "It would be wicked, thought Philip, and impious, to pray for luck." [6]

Other more positive control-signs are referred to:

> ". . . . There's a saying that he that would cross a river twice in the same day in a boat, will do well to eat fish for luck, lest he have an accident." [7]
>
> . . . . One of his upper front teeth was loose. This was lucky: . . . . [8]

Miners, about to quit work because they had not found coal, told their employer (the same Philip who thought it "wicked and impious" to pray for luck): "Now we want to put in one parting blast for luck." [9] And, "The men went back to the tunnel and 'put in a parting blast for luck,' anyhow." [10] In this case the control-sign availed.

When Huck fibs about a steamboat accident, the query "anybody hurt?" elicited the answer, "No'm. Killed a nigger." The comment following, "Well, it's lucky;" [11] may reveal a control-sign, but more probably meant that a Negro was nobody.

When Huck saw driftwood and other salable wreckage approaching, he exclaimed: "The June rise used to be always luck for me." [12]

"Nigger Jim" once warned Huck:

> ". . . . you mustn't count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck. The same if you shook the table-cloth after sundown. . . . . " [13]

Huck was unused to eating at formal table, and at the "Widder Douglass's" his awkwardness gave him a fright:

> One morning I happened to turn over the salt-cellar at breakfast. I reached for some of it as quick as I could to throw over my left shoulder and keep off the bad luck, but Miss Watson was in ahead of me, and crossed me off. . . . . The widow put in a good word for me, but that warn't going to keep off the bad luck, I knowed that well enough. . . . . There is ways to keep off some kinds of bad luck, but this wasn't one of them kind: so I never tried to do anything, but just poked along low-spirited and on the watch-out.[14]

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[6] *The Gilded Age*, II 273.
[7] *Joan of Arc*, I, 261.
[8] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 50.
[9] *The Gilded Age*, II, 313. The *locale* was Ilium, Pennsylvania.
[10] *Ibid.*, II, 313.
[11] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 306.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 21 f.

On the island, Huck learned of a taboo when he

> . . . . wanted to talk about the dead man and guess out how he come to be killed, but Jim didn't want to. He said it would fetch bad luck; . . . . [15]

But Huck boldly brought the subject into the conversation again:

> . . . . I said I reckoned they killed him, too; but Jim didn't want to talk about that. I says:
>
> "Now you think it's bad luck; but what did you say when I fetched in the snake-skin that I found on the top of the ridge day before yesterday? You said it was the worst bad luck in the world to touch a snake-skin with my hands. Well, here's your bad luck! We've raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides. I wish we could have some bad luck like this every day, Jim." [16]

But Jim stands by his first pronouncements:

> "Never you mind, honey, never you mind. Don't you git too peart. It's a-comin'. Mind I tell you, it's a-comin'." [17]

Later Huck is quite willing to believe in the signs, and to abide by Jim's warnings in the future:

> It did come, too. It was a Tuesday that we had that talk. Well, after dinner Friday we was laying around in the grass at the upper end of the ridge, and got out of tobacco. I went to the cavern to get some, and found a rattlesnake in there. I killed him, and curled him up on the foot of Jim's blanket, ever so natural, thinking there'd be some fun when Jim found him there. Well, by night I forgot all about the snake, and when Jim flung himself down on the blanket while I struck a light the snake's mate was there, and bit him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . . I made up my mind I wouldn't ever take a-holt of a snake-skin again with my hands, now that I see what had come of it. Jim said he reckoned I would believe him next time. And he said that handling a snake-skin was such awful bad luck that maybe we hadn't got to the end of it yet. He said he druther see the new moon over his left shoulder as much as a thousand times than take up a snake-skin in his hand. . . . . [18]

Apparently, then, there are degrees of malignance in taboos. Huck is not certain that he agrees with Jim:

> . . . . Well, I was getting to feel that way myself, though I've always reckoned that looking at the new moon over your left shoulder is one of the carelessest and foolishest things a body can do. Old Hank Bunker done it once, and bragged about it;

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 73 f.

> and in less than two years he got drunk and fell off of the shot-tower, and spread himself out so that he was just a kind of a layer, ... But anyway it all come of looking at the moon that way, like a fool.[19]

Just as Jim feared, their bad luck had scarcely begun. To a Negro attempting escape to a "free state," there could hardly have been a more disheartening piece of ill luck than to see his raft drift past the only safe landing place:

> " . . . . Po' niggers can't have no luck. I awluz 'spected dat rattlesnake-skin warn't done wid its work."
> "I wish I'd never seen that snake-skin, Jim—I do wish I'd never laid eyes on it."
> "It ain't yo' fault, Huck; you didn' know. Don't you blame yo'self 'bout it."[20]

Later in the day Huck and Jim found that the canoe in which lay their only hope of getting back upstream was gone:

> We didn't say a word for a good while. There warn't anything to say. We both knowed well enough it was some more work of the rattlesnake-skin; so what was the use to talk about it? It would only look like we was finding fault, and that would be bound to fetch more bad luck—and keep on fetching it, too, till we knowed enough to keep still.[21]

Even yet, Huck seems to fear that perhaps his reader will not believe in the rattlesnake superstition.

> Anybody that don't believe yet that it's foolishness to handle a snake-skin, after all that that snake-skin done for us, will believe it now if they read on and see what more it done for us.[22]

Follows his recital of how, shoving out again into the river on the raft, they were run down by a steamboat which did not see them. Huck's final comment is:

> . . . . That all comes of my being such a fool as to not remember that wherever you leave a dead snake its mate always comes there and curls around it. . . . .[23]

Jim's wound, like Achilles', was "right on the heel,"[24] small but a significant consistency, for in *The Gilded Age* (written thirteen years before in collaboration with Charles

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Dudley Warner [25]), a situation occurs in which a young easterner purchases leather *hip* boots as "a perfect protection against prairie-rattlesnakes, which never strike above the knee." [26]

To other snakelore there are two references in Mark Twain's works: a description of "the fabled 'hoop' breed," encountered in his childhood, from which, Clemens says, "we fled, without shame" [27]; and the appearance of snakes along with devils in Huck's "pap's" delirium tremens.[28]

All "crawly things" were thought to bring bad luck, under certain circumstances. When Huck accidentally killed a spider, he performed the most powerful remedial ceremonies he knew in order to ward off the evil effects. Never having heard of a charm to counteract the ill luck of killing a spider, he selected two of the commonest methods of keeping witches away. Thus is evident the relation of witchcraft to various taboos.

> . . . . Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horseshoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.[29]

In Negro folklore, "If you see a gray mare it is a sign of death." [30] Steamboat captains on the Mississippi River considered it unlucky to take a preacher and a gray mare aboard. Mark Twain comments:

> That this combination—of preacher and gray mare—should breed calamity seems strange, and at first glance unbelievable; but the fact is fortified by so much unassailable proof that to doubt is to dishonor reason. . . . . [31]

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[25] *The Gilded Age* was published in 1872; *Huckleberry Finn* in 1885.
[26] *The Gilded Age*, I, 125. This chapter was written by C. D. Warner. (See footnote, *Ibid.*, I, xvi.)
[27] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 103.
[28] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 39 f.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 4 f.
[30] N. N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, p. 476.
[31] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 212.

He cites an instance of the "unassailable proof":

> . . . . I myself remember a case where a captain was warned by numerous friends against taking a gray mare and a preacher with him, but persisted in his purpose in spite of all that could be said; and the same day—it may have been the next, and some say it was, though I think it was the same day—he got drunk and fell down the hatchway and was borne to his home a corpse. This is literally true.[32]

These reminiscences arose during a conversation about sunken steamboats which took place when Mark Twain revisited the Mississippi after an absence of twenty-one years from the pilot-house:

> . . . . A good many steamboat corpses lie buried there, out of sight; among the rest, my first friend, the *Paul Jones*; she knocked her bottom out, and went down like a pot, so the historian told me—Uncle Mumford. He said she had a gray mare aboard, and a preacher. To me, this sufficiently accounted for the disaster; as it did, of course, to Mumford, who added:
>
> "But there are many ignorant people who would scoff at such a matter, and call it superstition. But you will always notice that they are people who have never traveled with a gray mare and a preacher. I went down the river in such company. We grounded at Bloody Island; we grounded at Hanging Dog; we grounded just below this same Commerce; we jolted Beaver Dam Rock; we hit one of the worst breaks in the 'Graveyard' behind Goose Island; we had a roustabout killed in a fight; we burst a boiler; broke a shaft; collapsed a flue; and went into Cairo with nine feet of water in the hold—may have been more, may have been less. I remember it as if it were yesterday. The men lost their heads with terror. They painted the mare blue, in sight of town, and threw the preacher overboard, or we should not have arrived at all. The preacher was fished out and saved. He acknowledged, himself, that he had been to blame. I remember it all as if it were yesterday." [33]

In an aboriginal Hawaiian historical legend retold by Mark Twain in *Roughing It*, the turning point in a battle was said to have come when "the chief priest fell, pierced to the heart with a spear, and the unlucky omen fell like a blight upon the brave souls." [34]

"The people observe thy downcast head, thy clouded mien, and they take it for an omen," [35] scolded one of the courtiers in *The Prince and the Pauper* to the false prince, Tom Canty.

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 212 f.
[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 211 f.
[34] *Roughing It*, II, 191.
[35] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 244.

during the coronation parade; and later realized that "the omen was pregnant with prophecy. He is gone mad again!" [36]

After Jim had asked Huck, "What you want to know when good luck's a-comin' for? Want to keep it off?" he condescended to cite one of the rare instances when such foreknowledge might be valuable. He explained:

> . . . . "Ef you's got hairy arms en a hairy breas', it's a sign dat you's a-gwyne to be rich. Well, dey's some use in a sign like dat, 'kase it's so fur ahead. You see, maybe you's got to be po' a long time fust, en so you might git discourage' en kill yo'sef 'f you didn' know by de sign dat you gwyne to be rich byme-by."
>
> "Have you got hairy arms and a hairy breast, Jim?"
>
> "What's de use to ax dat question? Don't you see I has?"
>
> "Well, are you rich?"
>
> "No, but I ben rich wunst, and gwyne to be rich ag'in. Wunst I had foteen dollars, but I tuck to specalat'n', en got busted out." [37]

So ran their talk, and Huck seemed a bit dubious. But days later, far down the river, a small amount of money came to them, and Jim gleefully explained it on the basis of the sign:

> "*Dah*, now, Huck, what I tell you?—what I tell you up dah on Jackson Islan'? I *tole* you I got a hairy breas', en what's de sign un it; en I *tole* you I ben rich wunst, en gwineter to be rich *ag'in;* en it's come true; en heah she *is!* *Dah*, now! doan' talk to *me*—signs is *signs*, mine I tell you; en I knowed jis' 's well 'at I 'uz gwineter be rich ag'in as I's a-stannin' heah dis minute!" [38]

The potency of human hair is a very ancient belief. In *Following the Equator* a missionary to India demonstrates to Mark Twain that Hindu legends, because of the enormity of power they attribute to their gods, make unavailing as a Christianizing influence even the famed Biblical example of the "strength" of hair:

> . . . . You saw that there was a supernatural property in the hair of Samson; for you perceived that when his hair was gone he was as other men.[39]

A survival of this ancient superstition may be found in the familiar figurative language of modern times:

> " . . . . I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head for all the world. . . . . " [40]

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[37] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 63 f.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 404.
[39] *Following the Equator*, I, 116.
[40] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 243.

When Mark Twain grows humorous at the expense of superstition it is not always apparent. Ordinarily when he refers to a superstition his deep-seated incredulity is present, but veiled. On occasion he is obviously ironic. The following instance is taken from what is alleged to be " Mr. Whymper's Narrative " of his ascent of the Matterhorn:

> . . . . The wine-bags also fell to my lot to carry, and throughout the day, after each drink, I replenished them secretly with water, so that at the next halt they were found fuller than before! This was considered a good omen, and little short of miraculous.[41]

The origin of many of the folk beliefs of superstitious peoples may be found, as is well known, in the naïve explanations they have invented to account for natural phenomena. In *A Tramp Abroad* Mark Twain deplored — or pretends to deplore — the rapid disappearance of " popular antiquities " that was almost contemporary with his literary life.

> . . . . We have not the reverent feeling for the rainbow that a savage has, because we know how it is made. We have lost as much as we gained by prying into that matter.[42]

He allows as enlightened a person as a clipper-ship captain to hail the rainbow as a good omen.

> " . . . . Toward evening saw a magnificent rainbow—*the first we had seen.* Captain said, 'Cheer up, boys; it's a prophecy—*it's the bow of promise!*' " [43]

Further comment on the rainbow occurs in *Roughing It*:

> . . . . What the sailors call "rain-dogs"—little patches of rainbow—are often seen drifting about the heavens in these latitudes, ... [44]

In those two famous volumes which are frequently referred to as " manuals of boy lore," Mark Twain balances folklore and narrative in skillful combination. Occasionally, however, he seems to include a bit of quaint lore simply " for atmosphere," or because it has interested him. Or he will show boy nature more clearly by this means.

> . . . . A little green worm came crawling over a dewy leaf, lifting two-t[h]irds of his body into the air from time to time and "sniffing around," then proceeding again—for he was measuring,

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[41] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 149.
[42] *Ibid.*, II, 170.
[43] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, "My Debut as a Literary Person," p. 100. An excerpt from Henry Ferguson's log.
[44] *Op. cit.*, II, 244.

Tom said; and when the worm approached him, of its own accord, he sat as still as a stone, with his hopes rising and falling, by turns, as the creature still came toward him or seemed inclined to go elsewhere; and when at last it considered a painful moment with its curved body in the air and then came decisively down upon Tom's leg and began a journey over him, his whole heart was glad—for that meant that he was going to have a new suit of clothes—without the shadow of a doubt a gaudy piratical uniform. . . . .[45]

An animal omen is explained in *The Prince and the Pauper* by the true prince:

" . . . . Moreover, I owe you thanks for a good omen; for when a king has fallen so low that the very rats do make a bed of him, it surely meaneth that his fortunes be upon the turn, since it is plain he can no lower go."[46]

Animal omens do not always presage good luck. Mark Twain seems to have made a rather complete study of dog portents:

. . . . Presently a dog set up a long, lugubrious howl just outside—within ten feet of them. The boys clasped each other suddenly, in an agony of fright.

"Which of us does he mean?" gasped Huckleberry.

"I dono—peep through the crack. Quick!"

"No, *you*, Tom!"

"I can't—I can't *do* it, Huck!"

"Please, Tom. There 'tis again!"

"Oh, lordy, I'm thankful!" whispered Tom. "I know his voice. It's Bull Harbison."

"Oh, that's good—I tell you, Tom, I was most scared to death; I'd 'a' bet anything it was a *stray* dog."

The dog howled again. The boys' hearts sank once more.

. . . . . .

Tom . . . . put his eye to the crack. . . . .

"Oh, Huck, IT'S A STRAY DOG!"

"Quick, Tom, quick! Who does he mean?"

"Huck, he must mean us both—we're right together."

"Oh, Tom, I reckon we're goners. . . . . "

. . . . . .

"Look, Hucky, look! He's got his *back* to us!"

Hucky looked, with joy in his heart.

"Well, he has, by jingoes! Did he before?"

"Yes, he did. But I, like a fool, never thought. Oh, this is bully, you know. *Now* who can he mean?"

The howling stopped. . . . .

. . . . . .

That long, lugubrious howl rose on the night air again! They turned and saw the strange dog standing within a few feet of

[45] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 121 f.
[46] *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

where Potter was lying, and *facing* Potter, with his nose pointing heavenward.

"Oh, geeminy, it's *him*!" exclaimed both. . . . .[47]

But this time it is Huck who voices a slight skepticism, and Tom who quotes the Negroes in support of the superstition:

"Say, Tom—they say a stray dog come howling around Johnny Miller's house, 'bout midnight, as much as two weeks ago; and a whipporwill come in and lit on the banisters and sung, the very same evening; and there ain't anybody dead there yet."

"Well, I know that. And suppose there ain't. Didn't Gracie Miller fall in the kitchen fire and burn herself terrible the very next Saturday?"

"Yes, but she ain't *dead*. And what's more, she's getting better, too."

"All right, you wait and see. She's a goner, just as dead sure as Muff Potter's a goner. That's what the niggers say, and they know all about these kind of things, Huck."[48]

Apparently animal noises at night were almost always considered ominous:

. . . . I heard an owl, away off, who-whooing about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; . . . .[49]

. . . . the deep baying of a hound floated up out of the distance, an owl answered with his sepulchral note. . . . .[50]

. . . . And now the tiresome chirping of a cricket that no human ingenuity could locate, began. Next the ghastly ticking of a death-watch in the wall at the bed's head made Tom shudder—it meant that somebody's days were numbered. Then the howl of a faroff dog rose on the night air, and was answered by a fainter howl from a remoter distance. . . . .[51]

A quiet cricket in a house is a good omen, but one "shrilling" or "chirping," is a prognostication of death.[52] The hooting of the owl, while not definitely recorded as an unfavorable omen, is said to be "ominous" and "dismal":

. . . . The hooting of an owl came from over the hill—ominous sound. . . . .[53]

. . . . dismal was the hoo-hooing of the owl and the wailing of the wolf, sent mourning by on the night wind.[54]

. . . . The hooting of a distant owl was all the sound that troubled the dead stillness. . . . .[55]

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[47] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 93 ff.
[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 95 f.
[49] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 4.
[50] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 206.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[52] T. F. Thiselton Dyer, *Folk Lore of Shakespeare*, p. 237.
[53] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 235.
[54] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 113.
[55] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 82.

In the main, Mark Twain's omens and signs are portentous of actual happenings. "Nigger Jim's" weather forecasts by observations of birds could be depended upon:

> Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going to rain. He said it was a sign when young chickens flew that way, and so he reckoned it was the same way when young birds done it. . . . .[56]

Huck wanted to catch some of the birds, but Jim warned him against it in a manner characteristic of the universal transmission of traditon. In one paragraph Mark Twain presents a taboo, the effect of violating the taboo, and the manner by which the tradition has passed by word of mouth through four generations:

> . . . . I was going to catch some of them, but Jim wouldn't let me. He said it was death. He said his father laid mighty sick once, and some of them catched a bird, and his old granny said his father would die, and he did.[57]

Jim's faith in his augury was so strong that he wished to move their little camp into a cave at once:

> . . . . And, besides, he said them little birds had said it was going to rain, and did I want the things to get wet?[58]

Huck was willing enough to move into the cavern:

> . . . . Pretty soon it darkened up, and begun to thunder and lighten; so the birds was right about it. Directly it begun to rain, and it rained like all fury, too, and I never see the wind blow so. . . . .[59]

Huck, watching the storm in security, eating fish and corn-pone, says, "Jim, this is nice." And Jim reminds him, with a trace of reproof:

> "Well, you wouldn't 'a' ben here 'f it hadn't 'a' ben for Jim. You'd 'a' ben down dah in de woods widout any dinner, en gittin' mos' drownded, too; dat you would, honey. Chickens knows when it's gwyne to rain, en so do de birds, chile."[60]

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[56] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 62 f.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

VII

PROVERBS

In his use of proverbs Mark Twain is often merely allusive, assuming that the reader is familiar enough with certain maxims to make their complete statement unnecessary.

> . . . . Give a dog a bad name, etc.[1]
>
> The first shall be last, etc. . . . . [2]
>
> . . . . We laugh, and say, "Speak of the devil," and so forth, and there we drop it, ... [3]
>
> . . . . enough early rising in it to make a man far more "healthy and wealthy and wise" than any one man has any right to be. . . . . [4]
>
> . . . . and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again.[5]
>
> "It's bread cast upon the waters—it'll return after many days," said the old lady. . . . . [6]
>
> . . . . And what a fortune for that kind man who set his bread afloat upon the waters! . . . . [7]
>
> . . . . the dissolute Colonel . . . . who has reaped the harvest he sowed, ... [8]

In a few instances he purposely gives proverbs sly twists for humorous effects:

> . . . . that calamity killed the mule that laid the golden egg—which is but a figurative expression and will be so understood. . . . . [9]
>
> . . . . Every silver lining has a cloud behind it, as the poet says; and that remark has always cheered me, though I never could see any meaning to it. Everybody uses it, though, and everybody gets comfort out of it. I wish they would start something fresh. Come, now, let's cheer up; there's been as good fish in the sea as there are now. . . . . [10]
>
> " . . . . you know there ain't any country but what a prophet's an honor to, as the proverb says. . . . . " [11]

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[1] *Roughing It*, I, 69.
[2] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 229.
[3] *Literary Essays*, "Mental Telegraphy," p. 116.
[4] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 171.
[5] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, p. 69.
[6] *The Gilded Age*, I, 17.
[7] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, p. 5.
[8] *The Gilded Age*, II, 163. In a quoted editorial, probably of his own manufacture, about Laura Hawkins, murderess.
[9] *Ibid.*, I, 67.
[10] *Ibid.*, II, 207.
[11] *Ibid.*, I, 45.

Mark Twain draws his proverbs from sources too many and too scattered to trace in this study. In the following list (alphabetical, insofar as possible, to facilitate reference) classification has been made in two groups: (1) Maxims; (2) Metaphorical Proverbs.

Maxims

. . . . for all things come to him who waits.[12]

. . . . An Englishman does dearly love a lord, ...[13]

. . . . proof once established is better left so.[14]

. . . . boys will be boys, ...[15]

. . . . Note that venerable proverb: Children and fools *always* speak the truth. . . . .[16]

. . . . It was according to the old saying, "Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell." . . . .[17]

. . . . he laughs best who laughs last.[18]

The axiom says, "History repeats itself." . . . .[19]

But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. . . . .[20]

. . . . it never rains but it pours, ...[21]

. . . . learning softeneth the heart and breedeth gentleness and charity.[22]

Life's on'y a fleetin' show, John, as the sayin' is. . . . .[23]

. . . . The proverb says, "like master, like man"; . . . .[24]

" . . . . man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble," as the Scripture says, and I reckon it's so. . . . .[25]

It has been said that misfortunes never come one at a time, but in a body. . . . .[26]

. . . . old fools is the biggest fools there is. . . . .[27]

. . . . Procrastination is the thief of time. . . . .[28]

. . . . prophecies boldly uttered never fall barren on superstitious ears. . . . .[29]

. . . . Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book says. . . . .[30]

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[12] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 131.
[13] *The $30,000 Bequest*, "Does the Race of Man Love a Lord?" p. 325.
[14] *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, p. 25.
[15] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 390.
[16] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "On the Decay of the Art of Lying," p. 361.
[17] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 123.
[18] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "The Stolen White Elephant," p. 237.
[19] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 176.
[20] *The Innocents Abroad*, I, 263.
[21] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 377.
[22] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 22.
[23] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "Some Rambling Notes of an Idle Excursion," p. 245.
[24] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 205.
[25] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 3.
[26] *Joan of Arc*, I, 169.
[27] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 3.
[28] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 144. This is used by Mark Twain as a fit motto for "The Legend of the Seven Sleepers."
[29] *Joan of Arc*, I, 111.
[30] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 3.

. . . . The proverb says, "The unknown is always great." . . . .[31]

. . . . We's doin' blame' well, en we better let blame' well alone, as de good book says. . . . .[32]

" . . . . Never give up the ship! . . . .[33]

Metaphorical Proverbs

. . . . a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; . . . .[34]

. . . . Can't learn an old dog new tricks, as the saying is. . . . .[35]

. . . . De Good Book say de burnt chile shun de fire.[36]

. . . . There's a saying that he that would cross a river twice in the same day in a boat, will do well to eat fish for luck, lest he have an accident.[37]

. . . . mad as a hare in this month of March, ...[38]

. . . . She was as simple-hearted and honest as the day was long, ...[39]

. . . . I reckon you're a kind of a singed cat, as the saying is—better'n you look. . . . .[40]

. . . . He was the feather that broke the camel's back.[41]

This final feather broke the camel's back.[42]

. . . . the quicker a fresh-water fish is on the fire after he is caught the better he is; . . . .[43]

It will be noted that in several instances colloquial usage and oral transmission have wrought variations in the wording of the standard forms.

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[31] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 84.

[32] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 92. Popular belief incorrectly attributes to the Bible many sayings from entirely different sources.

[33] *The Gilded Age*, II, 207.

[34] *Ibid.*, II, 114.

[35] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 3.

[36] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 85. "Nigger Jim" explains this proverb by saying: "Mars Tom, dey *is* sich a thing as learnin' by expe'ence."

[37] *Joan of Arc*, I, 261.

[38] *The Gilded Age*, II, 163.

[39] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 105.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[41] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, I, 304.

[42] *Tom Sawyer*, p. 97. In both this and the preceding example, Mark Twain swerves from established usage by substituting "feather" for "straw."

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

VIII

SUNDRY SUPERSTITIONS

In Mark Twain's works there are a considerable number of scattered and occasional references to unrelated customs, traditions, and superstitions, quite apart from the lore of ghosts, witches, luck, and omens which, in the foregoing pages, have been discussed at some length. These are here brought together and presented in alphabetical order.

Customs Connected with the Calendar

A single reference to All Fool's day is found:

> *April* 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four.
>
> —*Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar.*[1]

There are a number of allusions to the celebration of Christmas. In his *Autobiography* Clemens twice mentions the merry holiday:

> . . . . in celebrating Christmas Eve around a Christmas tree in our house, ... Patrick came down the chimney (apparently) disguised as Saint Nicholas, ...[2]

He tells of his daughter Susy's amazement on first seeing a bearded man, of how she "came flying wide-eyed to her mother and said, 'Santa Claus has got loose.'"[3]

In an account of the *Quaker City* excursion, he muses upon a visit to the alleged birthplace of the Christ:

> I have no "meditations," suggested by this spot where the very first "Merry Christmas!" was uttered in all the world, and from whence the friend of my childhood, Santa Claus, departed on his first journey to gladden and continue to gladden roaring fire-sides on wintry mornings in many a distant land forever and forever. . . . .[4]

If on first thought one be alarmed by the adult Mr. Clemens' apparent swallowing of the Santa Claus legend "hook, line, and sinker," a moment's reflection will suggest, perhaps, that his concern was to preserve credulity in juvenile readers. Such a desire would be characteristic of Mark Twain.

In *A Tramp Abroad* he relates a colloquial version, inter-

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[1] *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 186.
[2] *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, II, 203.
[3] *Ibid.*, II, 243.
[4] *The Innocents Abroad*, II, 351.

spersed with his own comments, of the St. Nicholas story:

> . . . . This was the children's friend, Santa Claus, or St. Nicholas. There are some unaccountable reputations in the world. This saint's is an instance. He has ranked for ages as the peculiar friend of children, yet it appears he was not much of a friend to his own. He had ten of them, and when fifty years old he left them, and sought out as dismal a refuge from the world as possible, and became a hermit in order that he might reflect upon pious themes without being disturbed by the joyous and other noises from the nursery, doubtless.
>
> . . . . St. Nicholas will probably have to go on climbing down sooty chimneys, Christmas eve, forever, ... conferring kindness on other people's children, to make up for deserting his own. . . . .[5]

Creation Story

Accounts of the early Mississippi Valley superstitions concerning creation are not numerous in Mark Twain's works—or, for that matter, in anyone's works. Huck Finn tells of the theories he and "Nigger Jim" propounded:

> . . . . We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many. Jim said the moon could 'a' *laid* them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against it, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed they'd got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.[6]

Once, flying over the Sahara, Tom Sawyer asked:

> " . . . . How *did* He come to make it?"
>
> "Mars Tom, *I* b'lieve it uz jes like when you's buildin' a house; dey's allays a lot o' truck en rubbish lef' over. . . . . Now, den, it's my opinion hit was jest like dat—dat de Great Sahara warn't made at all, she jes' *happen'*."[7]

Jim was negroid, and his explanation of the Sahara should have been authoritative, but Tom raised one of his characteristic questions:

> " . . . . How does it come that there was just exactly enough star-stuff, and none left over? How does it come there ain't no sand-pile up there?"

To this Jim neatly countered:

> "What's de Milky Way?—dat's what *I* want to know. What's de Milky Way? . . . . "[8]

---

[5] *A Tramp Abroad*, II, 16.
[6] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 165 f.
[7] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, p. 78.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Cure

"Nigger Jim" tells Huck how to help cure rattlesnake bite:

> . . . . Jim told me to chop off the snake's head and throw it away, and then skin the body and roast a piece of it. I done it, and he eat it and said it would help cure him. He made me take off the rattles and tie them around his wrist, too. He said that that would help. . . . . [9]

Divination

The "Duke" whom Huck and Jim picked up on their down-river cruise, "done other wonderful things, like finding water and gold with a 'divining-rod.'" [10] In *The Gilded Age*, Mark Twain tells of a similar divination in the coal regions of Pennsylvania:

> The landlord at Ilium endeavored to persuade Philip to hire the services of a witch-hazel professor of that region, who could walk over the land with his wand and tell him infallibly whether it contained coal, and exactly where the strata ran. . . . . [11]

Of great interest to Tom and Huck is a common river practice of another sort, that was used in locating the bodies of drowned persons. They are particularly absorbed in this instance, because they themselves are the objects of the divination:

> . . . . There was a long silence, profound and unbroken; then a deep, sullen boom came floating down out of the distance.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> They waited a time that seemed an age, and then the same muffled boom troubled the solemn hush.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . . The little steam ferryboat was about a mile below the village, drifting with the current. Her broad deck seemed crowded with people. There were a great many skiffs rowing about or floating with the stream in the neighborhood of the ferryboat, but the boys could not determine what the men in them were doing. Presently a great jet of white smoke burst from the ferryboat's side, and as it expanded and rose in a lazy cloud, that same dull throb of sound was borne to the listeners again.
>
> "I know now!" exclaimed Tom; "somebody's drownded!"
>
> "That's it!" said Huck; "they done that last summer, when Bill Turner got drownded; they shoot a cannon over the water, and that makes him come up to the top. Yes, and they take loaves of bread and put quicksilver in 'em and set 'em afloat, and

[9] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 73.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[11] *The Gilded Age*, I, 295.

> wherever there's anybody that's drownded, they'll float right there and stop."
>
> "Yes, I've heard about that," said Joe. "I wonder what makes the bread do that."
>
> "Oh, it ain't the bread, so much," said Tom; "I reckon it's mostly what they *say* over it before they start it out."
>
> "But they don't say anything over it," said Huck. "I've seen 'em and they don't."
>
> "Well, that's funny," said Tom. "But maybe they say it to themselves. Of *course* they do. Anybody might know that."
>
> The other boys agreed that there was reason in what Tom said, because an ignorant lump of bread, uninstructed by an incantation, could not be expected to act very intelligently when sent upon an errand of such gravity.[12]

A year later Huck, hiding alone on the river bank, has a similar experience:

> . . . . Well, I was dozing off again when I thinks I hears a deep sound of "boom!" away up the river. I rouses up, and rests on my elbow and listens; pretty soon I hears it again. I hopped up, and went and looked out at a hole in the leaves, and I see a bunch of smoke laying on the water a long ways up—about abreast the ferry. And there was the ferryboat full of people floating along down. I knowed what was the matter now. "Boom!" I see the white smoke squirt out of the ferryboat's side. You see, they was firing cannon over the water, trying to make my carcass come to the top.
>
> . . . . So I set there and watched the cannon-smoke and listened to the boom. The river was a mile wide there, and it always looks pretty on a summer morning—so I was having a good enough time seeing them hunt for my remainders if I only had a bite to eat. Well, then I happened to think how they always put quicksilver in loaves of bread and float them off, because they always go right to the drownded carcass and stop there. So, says I, I'll keep a lookout, and if any of them's floating around after me I'll give them a show. . . . . A big double loaf come along, and I most got it with a long stick, but my foot slipped and she floated out further. Of course I was where the current set in the closest to the shore—I knowed enough for that. But by and by along comes another one, and this time I won. I took out the plug and shook out the little dab of quicksilver, and set my teeth in. It was "baker's bread"—what the quality eat; none of your low-down corn-pone.[13]

"Nigger Jim" had a "hair-ball" which he claimed possessed miraculous powers of divination. In fact, given the proper encouragement, it could foretell one's whole life.

> Miss Watson's nigger, Jim, had a hair-ball as big as your fist, which had been took out of the fourth stomach of an ox, and he used to do magic with it. He said there was a spirit inside of it, and it knowed everything. So I went to him that night and told him pap was here again, for I found his tracks in the snow. What

[12] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 125 ff.
[13] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 51 f.

I wanted to know was, what he was going to do, and was he going to stay? Jim got out his hair-ball and said something over it, and then he held it up and dropped it on the floor. It fell pretty solid, and only rolled about an inch. Jim tried it again, and then another time, and it acted just the same. Jim got down on his knees, and put his ear against it and listened. But it warn't no use; he said it wouldn't talk. He said sometimes it wouldn't talk without money. I told him I had an old slick counterfeit quarter that warn't no good because the brass showed through the silver a little, and it wouldn't pass nohow, even if the brass didn't show, because it was so slick it felt greasy, and so that would tell on it every time. (I reckoned I wouldn't say nothing about the dollar I got from the judge.) I said it was pretty bad money, but maybe the hair-ball would take it, because maybe it wouldn't know the difference. Jim smelt it and bit it and rubbed it, and said he would manage so the hair-ball would think it was good. . . . . so anybody in town would take it in a minute, let alone a hair-ball. . . . .

Jim put the quarter under the hair-ball, and got down and listened again. This time he said the hair-ball was all right. He said it would tell my whole fortune if I wanted it to. I says, go on. So the hair-ball talked to Jim, and Jim told it to me. He says: "Yo' ole father doan' know yit what he's a-gwyne to do. Sometimes he spec he'll go 'way, en den ag'in he spec he'll stay. De bes' way is to res' easy en let de ole man take his own way. Dey's two angels hoverin' roun' 'bout him. One uv 'em is white en shiny, en t'other one is black. De white one gits him to go right a little while, den de black one sail in en bust it all up. A body can't tell yit which one gwyne to fetch him at de las'. But you is all right. You gwyne to have considable trouble in yo' life, en considable joy. Sometimes you gwyne to git hurt, en sometimes you gwyne to git sick; but every time you's gwyne to git well ag'in. Dey's two gals flyin' 'bout you in yo' life. One uv 'em's light en t'other one is dark. One is rich en t'other is po'. You's gwyne to marry de po' one fust en de rich one by en by. You wants to keep 'way fum de water as much as you kin, en don't run no resk, 'kase it's down in de bills dat you's gwyne to git hung." [14]

It is obvious that Jim is in the secret of the hair-ball and that he will not let it talk without money. How he could be high priest of this fetish, know its secret, and yet retain his deep-rooted faith in every superstition that came to his attention, is scarcely explicable even when one considers his ignorance and his racial background.

Huck's comment on the hair-ball's prediction is brief:

When I lit my candle and went up to my room that night there sat pap—his own self! [15]

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[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 23 ff.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Drowning in the Mississippi

Mark Twain commented in a footnote in *Life on the Mississippi* on a superstition current in 1837 concerning that river.

> There was a foolish superstition of some little prevalence in that day that the Mississippi would neither buoy up a swimmer nor permit a drowned person's body to rise to the surface.

He says of Captain Marryat's description: "Receive, now the emotions of Captain Marryat, R. N., author of sea tales, writing in 1837." He then added the footnote to explain a "foolish superstition" about the river. Captain Marryat wrote, in part:

> ". . . . It is a furious, rapid, desolating torrent, loaded with alluvial soil; and few of those who are received into its waters ever rise again, or can support themselves long upon its surface without assistance from some friendly log. . . . . "[16]

Does the firing of the cannon mentioned in the foregoing[17] counteract this superstition? Did it have its origin in an attempt to nullify it?

Riddles

Huck Finn's first acquaintance with riddles came while he was changing his pants for a pair belonging to Buck Grangerford, an urchin of his own age:

> . . . . he asked me where Moses was when the candle went out. I said I didn't know; I hadn't heard about it before, no way.
>
> "Well, guess," he says.
>
> "How'm I going to guess," says I, "when I never heard tell of it before?"
>
> "But you can guess, can't you? It's just as easy."
>
> "*Which* candle?" I says.
>
> "Why, any candle," he says.
>
> "I don't know where he was," says I; "where was he?"
>
> "Why, he was in the *dark!* That's where he was!"
>
> "Well, if you knowed where he was, what did you ask me for?"
>
> "Why, blame it, it's a riddle, don't you see? . . . . "[18]

As will be seen, this is not a true riddle, but belongs to the large class of those conundrums which depend on a "catch" for the entertainment.

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[16] *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 227. Mark Twain gave a series of descriptions of the Mississippi River, showing how various beholders had reacted emotionally to the great stream—from La Salle in 1682 to Captain Marryat in 1837.

[17] See *supra*, 71 f.

[18] *Huckleberry Finn*, pp. 136 f.

Sign of the Cross

In Mark Twain the protective character of the sign of the cross is of peculiar significance. Huck's pap, the town drunkard, adopted the most interesting use of the sign:

> . . . . There was a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil.[19]

"Everybody crossed himself in a grisly fright,"[20] Sir Boss, in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, tells the reader when an old woman utters a curse in Morgan Le Fay's castle.

Joan of Arc prevailed upon an English soldier to make her a rough cross upon which she might gaze while being consumed by the flames;[21] and the young Count de Laval said that at an earlier time,

> " . . . . when she was ready to mount her great black horse he reared and plunged and would not let her. Then she said, 'Lead him to the cross.' This cross was in front of the church close by. So they led him there. Then she mounted, and he never budged, any more than if he had been tied. . . . . "[22]

Clemens describes a "beautiful cross" in Charing Village, outside London, which was "built there by a bereaved king of earlier days"[23]— days that preceded the bringing of Christianity to the kingdoms by the Romish monks.

The conversation of Tom and Huck while treasure-hunting in the cavern shows the superstitious awe in which crosses were held in the Mississippi Valley a generation or so ago:

> "Tom, it's a *cross!*"
> "*Now* where's your Number Two? *'Under the cross,'* hey? . . . . "
> Huck stared at the mystic sign awhile, and then said with a shaky voice:
> "Tom, le's git out of here!"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> " . . . . Injun Joe's ghost ain't a-going to come around where there's a cross!"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Tom, I didn't think of that. But that's so. It's luck. . . . . "[24]

---

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[20] *A Connecticut Yankee*, p. 139.
[21] *Literary Essays*, "Saint Joan of Arc," pp. 374 f.; *Joan of Arc*, II, 279.
[22] *Ibid.*, I, 291.
[23] *The Prince and the Pauper*, p. 10.
[24] *Tom Sawyer*, pp. 274 f.

Tom finally persuades Huck to see in the cross a sign favoring them rather than auguring against them, and the treasure-hunt proceeds, with Huck's joyful, " It's luck for us, that cross is." [25]

Sworn Covenant

Boy-like, Tom and Huck must " swear to keep mum " about their knowledge of Injun Joe's guilt of murder. No ordinary swearing will do. Here Mark Twain introduces the ancient folk belief in the potency of blood to attest an oath:

> " . . . . Now, look-a-here, Tom, less take and swear to one another—that's what we got to do—swear to keep mum."
>
> "I'm agreed. It's the best thing. Would you just hold hands and swear that we—"
>
> "Oh, no, that wouldn't do for this. That's good enough for little rubbishy common things—specially with gals, cuz *they* go back on you anyway, and blab if they get in a huff—but there orter be writing 'bout a big thing like this. And blood."
>
> Tom's whole being applauded this idea. It was deep, and dark, and awful; the hour, the circumstances, the surroundings, were in keeping with it. He picked up a clean pine shingle that lay in the moonlight, took a little fragment of "red keel" out of his pocket, got the moon on his work, and painfully scrawled these lines. . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer swears they will keep mum about this and they wish they may Drop down dead in their tracks if they ever tell and Rot."
>
> . . . . Tom unwound the thread from one of his needles, and each boy pricked the ball of his thumb and squeezed out a drop of blood. In time, after many squeezes, Tom managed to sign his initials, using the ball of his little finger for a pen. Then he showed Huckleberry how to make an H and an F, and the oath was complete. They buried the shingle close to the wall, with some dismal ceremonies and incantations, and the fetters that bound their tongues were considered to be locked and the key thrown away.[26]

Sympathetic Indication

Ancient traditions relate that wounds of a murdered person bleed afresh when the murderer approaches the body. Several instances of this occur in Shakespearean dramas; hence it is not improbable that Mark Twain was unconsciously combining the older tradition with the superstitions of his day when he introduced in *Tom Sawyer* the following incident:

---

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 275.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 91 f.

> Injun Joe helped to raise the body of the murdered man and put it in a wagon for removal; and it was whispered through the shuddering crowd that the wound bled a little! The boys thought that this happy circumstance would turn suspicion in the right direction; but they were disappointed, for more than one villager remarked:
>
> "It was within three feet of Muff Potter when it done it."[27]

Telling the Bees

A survival generally thought to be European is that bees must be told if their owner dies, or they, too, will soon experience death. Apparently the notion was current in Negro folklore of the Mississippi Valley in Mark Twain's time:

> . . . . And he [Jim] said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the bees must be told about it before sun-up the next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die. . . . .[28]

As in countless instances, the folklore item seemed to suggest to Mark Twain an opportunity for some characteristic jabbing quirk that heightened the narrative. For instance, immediately following the preceding quotation occurs the sentence:

> . . . . Jim said bees wouldn't sting idiots; but I didn't believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn't sting me.[29]

From the foregoing it will be seen that Mark Twain's folklore presents a happy combination of the first-hand knowledge which he absorbed spontaneously in his early environment, the second-hand information gained from wide and intelligent inquiry during his later travels, and what might be called the third-hand or literary knowledge gleaned from the many books to which his lively interest in the subject directed him. A comparison of the folklore in such books as *Following the Equator, The Innocents Abroad, A Tramp Abroad, Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* and *The Prince and the Pauper* with standard compilations shows that his second-hand and book-derived traditions and superstitions may be depended upon for a high degree of accuracy. But it is in the

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[28] *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 63.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Negro and Mississippi Valley lore of such books as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that Mark Twain has made his real and significant contribution to the history of American folk-thought. To these the highest degree of authenticity may be ascribed, and with the present wider dissemination of knowledge and rapid decrease of superstition the multiple varied items of sectional folklore recorded by Mark Twain are and will continue to be of increasing importance.

APPENDIX

THE GOLDEN ARM

(with Mark Twain's directions for making the telling effective)

Once 'pon a time dey wuz a monsus mean man, en he live 'way out in de prairie all 'lone by hisself, 'cep'n he had a wife. En bimeby she died, en he tuck en toted her way out dah in de prairie en buried her. Well, she had a golden arm — all solid gold, fum de shoulder down. He wuz pow'ful mean — pow'ful; en dat night he couldn't sleep, caze he want dat golden arm so bad.

When it come midnight he couldn't stan' it no mo'; so he git up, he did, en tuck his lantern en shoved out thoo de storm en dug her up en got de golden arm; en he bent his head down 'gin de win', en plowed en plowed thoo de snow. Den all of a sudden he stop (make a considerable pause here, and look startled, and take a listening attitude) en say: "My *lan'*, what's dat?"

En he listen—en listen—en de win' say (set your teeth together and imitate the wailing and wheezing singsong of the wind), "Bzzz-z-zzz"—en den, way back yonder whah de grave is, he hear a *voice!* — he hear a voice all mix' up in de win'—can't hardly tell 'em 'part—"Bzzz—zzz—W-h-o—g-o-t—m-y—g-o-l-d-e-n *arm?*" (You must begin to shiver violently now.)

En he begin to shiver en shake, en say, "Oh, my! *Oh*, my lan'!" en de win' blow de lantern out, en de snow en sleet blow in his face en mos' choke him, en he start a-plowin' knee-deep towards home mos' dead, he so sk'yerd—en pooty soon he hear de voice agin, en (pause) it 'us comin' *after* him! "Bzzz—zzz—zzz—W-h-o—g-o-t—m-y—g-o-l-d-e-n—*arm?*"

When he git to de pasture he hear it agin—closter now, en a-*comin'!*—a-comin' back dah in de dark en de storm — (repeat the wind and the voice). When he git to de house he rush up-stairs en jump in de bed en kiver up, head and years, en lay dah shiverin' en shakin' — en den way out dah he hear it *agin!* — en a-*comin'!* En bimeby he hear (pause — awed,

listening attitude) — pat — pat — pat — *hit's a-comin' upstairs!* Den he hear de latch, en he *know* it's in de room!

Den pooty soon he know it's a-*stannin' by de bed!* (Pause.) Den — he know it's a-*bendin' down over him* — en he cain't skasely git his breath! Den—den—he seem to feel someth'n, *c-o-l-d*, right down 'most agin his head! (Pause.)

Den de voice say, *right at his year*—"W-h-o—g-o-t—m-y—g-o-l-d-e-n *arm?*" (You must wail it out very plaintively and accusingly; then you stare steadily and impressively into the face of the farthest-gone auditor — a girl, preferably — and let that awe-inspiring pause begin to build itself in the deep hush. When it has reached exactly the right length, jump suddenly at that girl and yell, "*You've* got it!"

If you've got the *pause* right, she'll fetch a dear little yelp and spring right out of her shoes. But you *must* get the pause right; and you will find it the most troublesome and aggravating and uncertain thing you ever undertook.[1]

[1] *The $30,000 Bequest*, "How to Tell a Story," pp. 268 ff.

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